

# TRACTS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED  
BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY  
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE  
AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

---

VOL. VI.

---

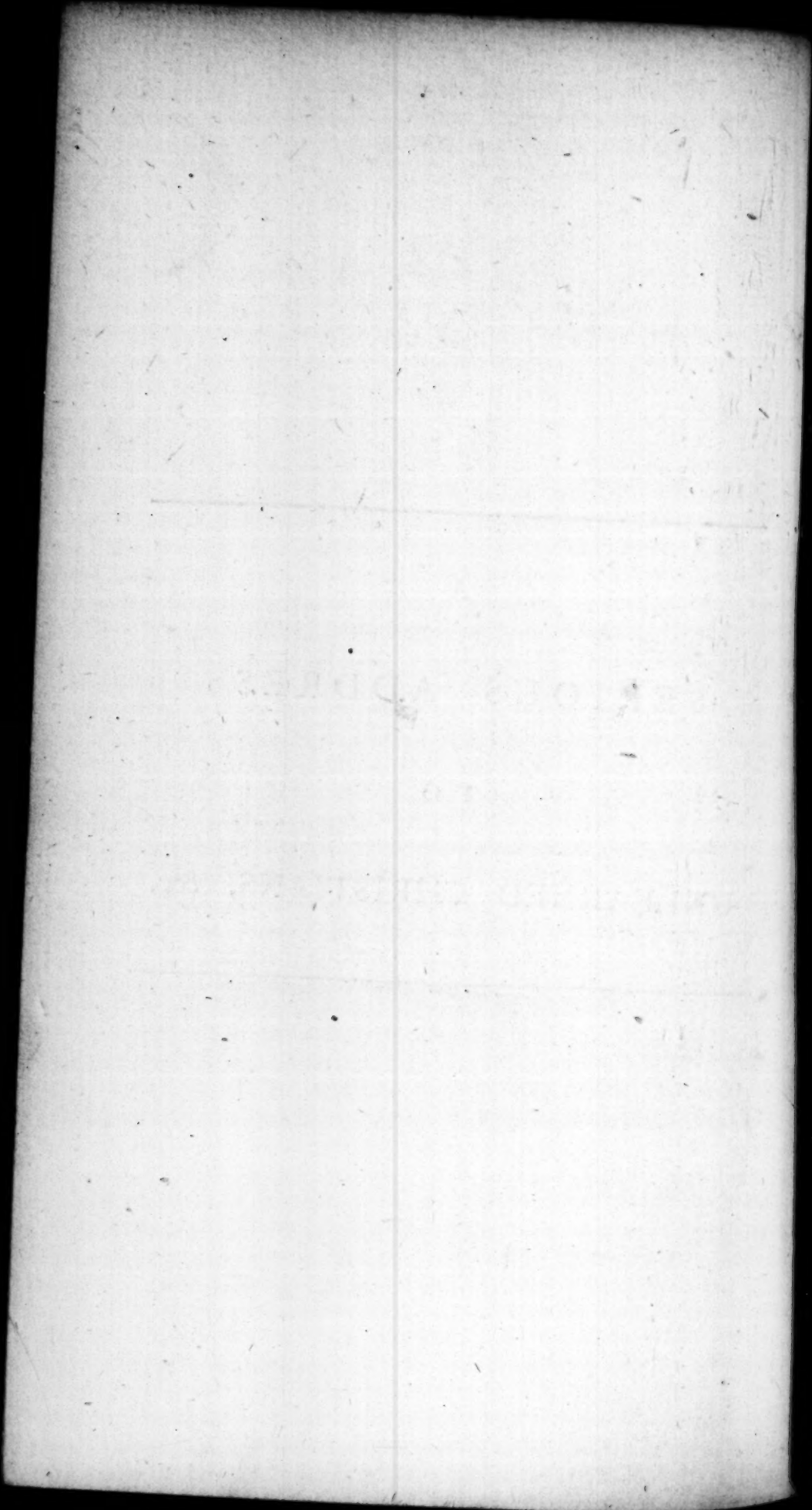
CONTAINING,

- I. AN ADDRESS TO UNLEARNED CHRISTIANS.
- II. A REPRESENTATION OF THE NATURE OF  
TRUE RELIGION.
- III. MR. LINDSEY'S CATECHIST.
- IV. MR. ROGERS'S FIVE SERMONS.

---

LONDON:

PRINTED MDCCXCH.



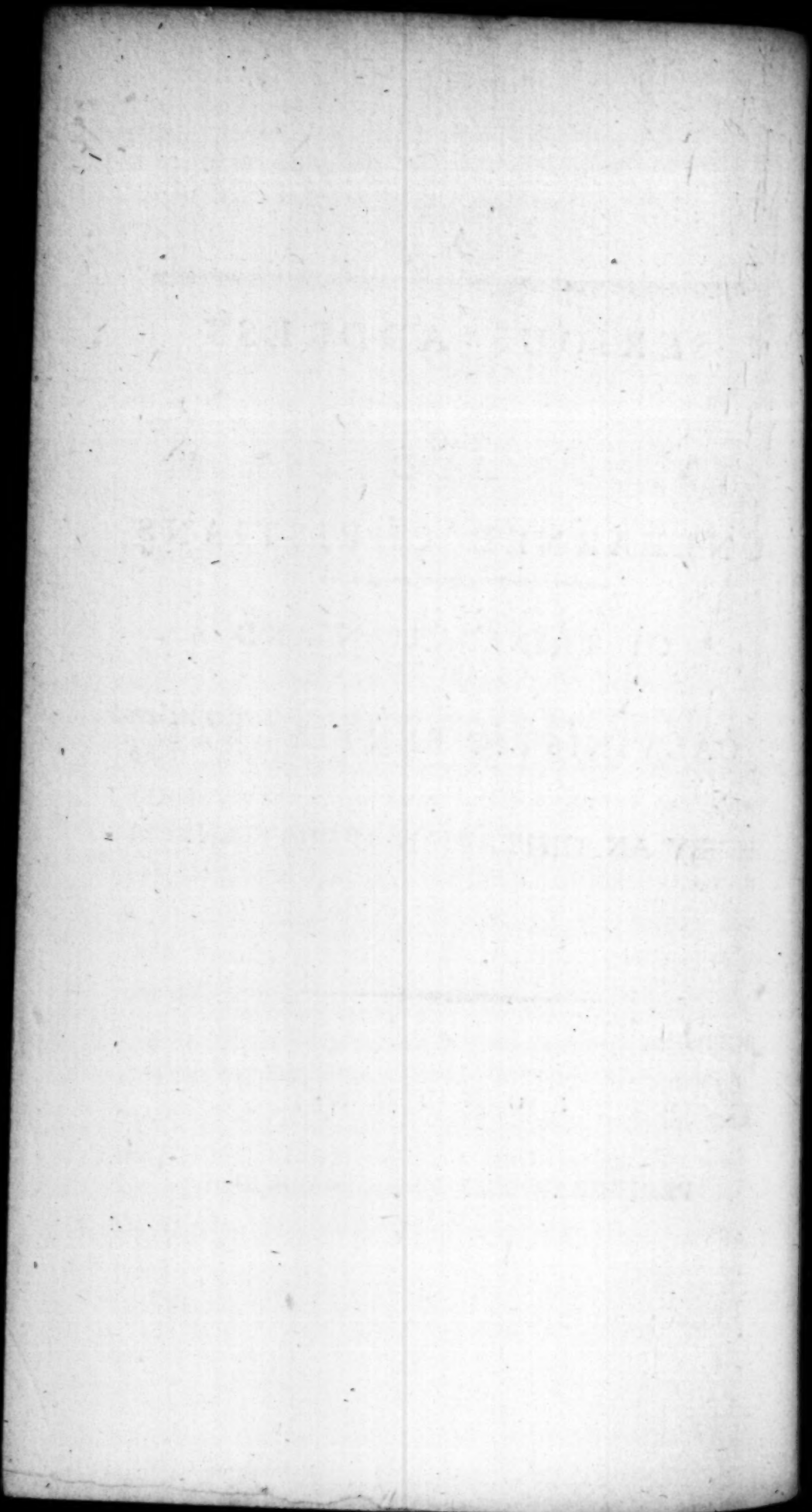


A  
SERIOUS ADDRESS  
TO  
UNLEARNED CHRISTIANS  
OF TRINITARIAN AND  
CALVINISTIC SENTIMENTS.  
BY AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.

---

L O N D O N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCII.



---

A

## SERIOUS ADDRESS, &c.

---

MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS,

I USE this form of speech in order to particularize the persons whom I am addressing; namely, those who, not having had the benefit of a liberal education, are not acquainted with the learned languages or with ecclesiastical history. And I hope that you will excuse the freedom of a few plain hints on a very important subject. I take it for granted, that you have been trained up, to a reverence for the scriptures, and to a sincere value for the truth taught in them. In cherishing this reverence for scripture, and this love for scripture-truth, you certainly do well. Religious truth is that which every one, who has a capacity for enquiry, should ardently pursue: and the discoveries made in scripture on subjects of the greatest consequence are of inestimable worth. I cannot then wonder, that when you are told, by

those in whom you are accustomed to place a confidence, that this or that particular system of divinity degrades God, vilifies the saviour, undermines christianity, or strips it of its fundamental doctrines, and pours contempt on scripture, you are ready to listen to these insinuations, to think with horror of the system, and to regard with aversion all who maintain it. But, my friends, it is possible that your teachers may have given you wrong information, and may have endeavoured to prejudice you against the system particularly referred to, without being themselves acquainted with its nature and tendency. Be not afraid to enquire and to judge for yourselves. It is your duty to enquire; and, in regard to many arguments produced in the debate, you are sufficiently qualified for judging. Be not afraid of truth, or of its consequences, wherever it may appear to be found. It never did, and never can do, any one any harm. Cherish an honest love of truth, an indifference to every thing but truth. And be pleased to remember, that those, who have departed the farthest from the religious system which you have embraced, can have no possible motive to it but the same love of truth; which they pursue with as much solicitude as any others of their fellow-christians, and which they think they have found in a set of opinions very different from theirs. It cannot, it cannot, be the real intention of any professor of christianity, to  
misrepresent



misrepresent its doctrines, or to vilify its illustrious Author. Be intreated then to attend with calmness and patience to a few observations, which may serve to throw a little light upon the subject, and to do justice to the character and conduct of some of your fellow-professors upon whom the most injurious reflections have been cast.

§ 1. You have heard, no doubt, of different systems of religious truth, which have been adopted by different persons, and which have been called Trinitarian or Antitrinitarian, Calvinistic or Arminian, &c. But let me ask you, are these several systems to be considered as any other than the opinions of particular persons concerning the doctrines of christianity? The Athanasian doctrine was certainly the opinion of Athanasius; the Arian, that of Arius; the Socinian, that of Socinus; the Calvinistic, that of Calvin; the Arminian, that of Arminius. They were the opinions which these particular persons entertained concerning the truths of the gospel. They have been received by others, either according to the apprehended strength of the arguments by which their proposers supported them, or according as they were favoured by particular bishops or emperors. But still, by whomsoever proposed or received, or howsoever supported, they were originally no more than the particular opinions of him who proposed them, and still are no more than the particular opinions of those who embrace them.



§ 2. Is it not, therefore, great arrogance in any one set of fallible men, to assert with positiveness that their own particular opinions are the very fundamentals of christianity, and to charge those who differ from them with denying the fundamentals of the christian faith? Will any one pretend to say, that either Athanasius, Arius, or Socinus, either Calvin or Arminius, or any one of those who have since thought like any of them, was an infallible judge of controversy, an unerring interpreter of scripture? Must it not then be great arrogance and presumption, and that in every one alike, to assert with confidence, that his system of divinity is the very essence of christianity, and that those who do not agree with him are endeavouring to subvert the whole gospel by rejecting what is essential to it? How can such bold assertions as these, and especially how can such rash censures of others, be consistent with acknowledging that no one is infallible? It is allowed that in proportion as any person, after full and fair enquiry, thinks he has attained the truth, he is justified in saying that he believes himself to be possessed of it. But ought not all persons to reflect, that they are still liable to error, that perhaps their confidence may arise from want of farther information, and that others have the same right of judging for themselves which they have? If they do not, why do they disown a claim to infallibility? On this principle, though at one time they disown it, at another they really maintain

tain it, and act as if they could prove a title to it. Is not this conduct altogether inconsistent with that right of private judgment, which, as all agree, belongs to every one? And must it not be wholly destructive of all christian candour and brotherly kindness? If every one will maintain that his own particular tenets are essential to christianity, and that all who differ from him reject the fundamentals of christianity: how can that spirit of harmony and friendship exist among the professors of it, upon which our blessed master hath laid so great a stress?

§ 3. But it is worth while to enquire particularly what is declared in the New Testament itself to be fundamental to christianity. I therefore refer you, my friends, to the history of Jesus Christ as given by the four evangelists, and to that of the apostles as recorded by Luke, where you have an account, of the travels of Jesus and his apostles, of what they preached, and of the terms upon which they admitted their converts into the number of professed christians. These you are able to understand as well as the most learned of your teachers. Read them for yourselves. And judge for yourselves, whether that which the gospel-histories were written to promote the belief of—that which the miracles of Jesus were intended to prove—that which the labours, the preaching, the miracles of his apostles, were all designed to confirm and to propagate—that the acknowledgement of which

was deemed sufficient to entitle a person to christian baptism—was not simply this truth (when proposed to those who already acknowledge the being of one God) that Jesus was a messenger sent from God, or (in the language of the apostles; as soon as they were at liberty fully to declare their master's character and office) "the Christ." I appeal to yourselves, on an impartial study of the New Testament history, whether this was not the great article which was recommended to the faith of mankind; and the belief of which was esteemed sufficient to entitle them to the name and privileges of christians. I appeal to yourselves, whether there is, in the accounts which the evangelists and apostles give of their master, and of the great object of his mission, the slightest hint of the commonly received opinions of his proper deity and satisfaction as being *essential* to christianity. Read what he says of himself; and consider what it is, respecting himself, on which he lays the greatest stress. Read what the apostles, Peter and Paul, are recorded, in the history of their acts, to have said of him; and see what is the character in which they exhibit him. See whether they represent him as sustaining any higher character than that of a messenger from God, and whether they do not seem to have considered the belief and acknowledgement of this as the only thing fundamental to christianity (that is, when they were addressing those who worshipped



stripped the One only true God). Now, if this truth alone was considered by the first preachers of the gospel as fundamental to it, what right have others after them to invent new fundamentals, and to reproach those who do not submit to their usurped authority, as stripping christianity of what is essential to it?

§ 4. Since therefore nothing is declared, in the gospel itself, to be fundamental to christianity, beside this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, or a messenger from God, consider farther, whether there is any thing wanting in that system on which such opprobrious names have been lavished, which can on its own account be supposed to be fundamental to it. The system referred to, is generally called the Unitarian or Socinian scheme. It is called Unitarian, because they who embrace it look upon themselves as the only class of christians who really and properly maintain the unity of God. This is the only name by which they wish to distinguish their sentiments, because it is taken, not from persons, but from opinions. Their peculiar principles are indeed often called Socinian, from Socinus, who was one of the first who in later times revived the original doctrine of the apostle Peter (Acts ii. 22.) that Jesus of Nazareth was a man *approved of* God by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by him. But the scheme now called Socinian, differs very materially from that of Socinus. And therefore the de-



fenders of it do not chuse to take a name from the man himself: partly, because they think that this would intimate an approbation of all his peculiar tenets, which they do not really give to them; and partly, because they think that it would be like an acknowledgement of submission to his authority in matters of faith, which they intirely disavow. They prefer the name of Unitarians, because they imagine themselves to be the most consistent maintainers of the unity of God; a doctrine which, they think, has been undermined and subverted by the introduction of the Trinitarian scheme. I cannot express their sentiments more plainly than in the language of the apostle Paul (1 Tim. ii. 5.) that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men," (that is, the last and most distinguished revealer of the divine will) "the man Christ Jesus. Give me leave then to ask, is there any thing in this scheme which has the least tendency to overthrow the foundation of christian faith, obedience, or comfort? Consider it attentively; and judge for yourselves, whether the proper ground of our faith in Christ, of our obedience to him, of our expectations from him, is not secure upon the Unitarian system, at least as much as upon any other. And, if so, then think whether it can reasonably be said that this system strips christianity of any thing that is fundamental to it.

§ 5. As to the ground of christian faith, or, our belief that Jesus Christ was a messenger sent from  
God,

God. Did not Jesus speak of himself repeatedly and plainly as one who was sent or commissioned by God? And yet is it possible that he should sustain this character, if, according to the Trinitarian scheme, he is either the very and eternal God, or a part of him, or another being equal to him? Must he not be a being distinct from God, and in the most proper sense a creature of God, if he is to be considered as a messenger from God? And must he not be a much more suitable messenger to men, on the supposition of his being himself one of the human race, than on any other? What then is the evidence by which his divine mission is proved? Is it not uniformly represented as arising from the miracles which God wrought by him, and especially from his resurrection from the dead? And does not the Unitarian system leave the christian in full possession of all this? Yea, is not the resurrection of Jesus considered as the resurrection of a man, a more satisfactory proof that he was sent from God to preach the resurrection of mankind, than we could possibly have on any other supposition? Allowing that Jesus was naturally a man, we see a knowledge and a power displayed in him which was vastly superior to that of mere man. And therefore certainly we have the greater warrant to conclude, that God was with him, and consequently that he was sent from God. Observe then, my christian friends, the ground of your faith in Christ, as sustaining that character under which he is always held

held forth in the gospel, is secure, yea, peculiarly firm, on the Unitarian Scheme. Admit this scheme, and you may easily conceive how he may be a messenger from God. And you see that distinction preserved, which the New Testament always maintains, between the Sender and the sent. On the Trinitarian Scheme, this distinction is lost; and, either the Sender and the sent are one and the same being, or the sent is totally independent of, and no way subject to Him that sent him.

§ 6. As to the ground of Christian Obedience. Ask yourselves what this is. Must you not acknowledge upon a little reflection, that it is the authority of God; exercised, not indeed for the purpose of shewing his own sovereignty, but to lead you in the best way to your own truest happiness? Now is not a precept delivered even by a Man, if that man is *approved* as a messenger from God by miracles and wonders and signs which God works by him, to be considered as coming from God, as much as if it were given immediately by a voice from heaven? You cannot but acknowledge that the laws given to the Israelites by the mouth of Moses, respecting the government of their state, or the observance of ceremonies, sacrifices and feasts, were as much binding upon them as the ten commandments, which were delivered with an audible voice from heaven. And why, but because Moses was proved to be a messenger from God by the wonderful miracles which  
God



God wrought by him? And yet Moses was but a man; and not so much distinguished in point of knowledge or power, as the Unitarians suppose Jesus Christ to have been. If then the ground, upon which the obedience of the Israelites was demanded, remained unshaken, notwithstanding that the messenger of God to them was but a man, why should it be thought that the obligation, which christians are under to obey the precepts of the gospel, is undermined, if it be allowed that he who brought them was but a man? Do but consider the matter coolly and without prejudice; and I think you must allow that, whatever be the original rank and dignity of the messenger, the regard which you ought to pay to his message, and the obligation you are under to obey his commands, depend entirely on the proof he gives that he is sent from God; so that, if he brings sufficient evidence of this, you are equally bound to hear and reverence him, whether he be the highest of angels, or a mere man.

§ 7. As to the ground of christian comfort. Peculiar stress has been laid on this circumstance. And, by the manner in which many have expressed themselves upon it, you have been led to believe, that the state of mankind is quite desperate, and that they have no hope for time or eternity, unless Jesus Christ hath made full satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, in order to which they conceive that he must be some way or other an infinite Being. But, my christian friends,



friends, be not deceived by rash and confident assertions. Read the scriptures for yourselves ; and think for yourselves, what is likely to be their genuine meaning, and what will make their doctrine consistent with itself, on this head. You are taught to build all your hope of the pardon of sin and of future happiness on a satisfaction made to divine justice for sins. Now, if Jesus Christ be (as it is the present fashion to call him) the only true God ; the satisfaction he has given, must be paid to himself. And is this sufficient to answer the end proposed, to acquit the sinner of the demands of rigorous justice ? or can it afford any solid ground of comfortable reliance ? If Jesus be another God independent of, or equal to the Father, must it not follow that he is no subject of him who is the Lawgiver and Judge of men, and consequently that *his* good conduct cannot answer the demands of our moral Governor upon *us* ? Observe too, that this satisfaction is said to be made by his sufferings and death. But, can God suffer ? can God die ? On the other hand, allow that Jesus Christ is one of the creatures of God, and it will indeed follow that he is a subject of the divine government, as much so as the meanest of them, let him be ever so exalted a being ; but, let it be remembered, it will likewise follow, that he must obey the divine law for himself, and that no obedience which he has paid to it can satisfy the demands it makes upon us. The law of God requires obedience from  
every

every one who is subject to it, and knows nothing of one creature obeying for another. Unless every one of them pays obedience to it, as far as it is made known to him, its demands are not satisfied. You have heard indeed of one person obeying commands, or suffering punishments instead of another. But, if you will use your own reason, you must certainly be convinced that this is a thing in its own nature absolutely impossible. One person may receive advantage from the obedience of another, or may suffer disadvantage from his disobedience. But it is impossible that obedience or punishment should be transferred, or that what is paid or endured by one person should answer the demands of law upon another. You will readily acknowledge that this is impossible under human governments; and a very little reflection might convince you that it is equally impossible under the divine. If these things are so then, where is the boasted satisfaction upon which you are taught to build all your hope; It is reduced to what is, in the very nature of things, impossible. If then the thing itself is an impossibility, why should general expressions of scripture have a particular sense forced upon them, or figurative texts be strained to a literal meaning, to make them teach it? Does scripture itself assert it in plain and positive terms, or lead you to derive all your comfort from it? And indeed, supposing that the doctrine is true, and that the satisfaction taken for granted has really been offered

to divine justice; what is your warrant for believing that it has been accepted? Must not this be, the promise and covenant of God, (I mean of Him, to whose authority *we* are subject, and on whose pleasure *our* happiness must depend) to accept it? After all, then, must not the ground of your hope and comfort ultimately be, the promise of God, whether respecting the pardon of sin, or the bestowment of future happiness? And, supposing the Unitarian system to be true, that Jesus was a man sent from God, who hath made the brightest discoveries of the love and mercy of God, and hath brought the most encouraging promises in the name of God; are you not left in full possession of this ground of comfort still? Are declarations of the original love and goodness of God less worthy of your regard, or are the promises of God of less value, because brought by one of the human race; if he is sufficiently proved to be a messenger from God? When you are led to consider God as a Father, who sent to save the world, because He loved the world; cannot you trust him? When you are assured, in the name of God, that He will forgive the trespasses of those who truly repent of and forsake their sins; cannot you believe the assurances? Why will you overlook the solemn promises of one who cannot lie, who is disposed of His free love and mercy to pardon penitent sinners, and chuse rather to rely on a supposed satisfaction made to His justice, which there is the  
greatest



greatest reason to think is in its own nature an absolute impossibility? Or why should you think the Unitarian system an enemy to your comfort, when it leaves you in full possession of that which is on all hands allowed to be ultimately the foundation of it? But besides, you are to consider that the system in question holds up to your regards another most important promise, as the great promise of the New Testament, that which above all has made the revelation of the gospel a blessing, and of which you have peculiar evidence on this system; and that is, a resurrection from the dead, and a future state of everlasting happiness for the righteous. This, like the promise of the pardon of sin, must have its foundation in the free love and goodness of God. Now, if He really intends that men shall in due time be raised from death, in order to their receiving according to their works, and that the righteous shall then be made everlastingly happy; how could He give a more full assurance of this His intention, than by raising from the dead a man distinguished for piety, benevolence and righteousness, and rewarding him with an endless life? If the Unitarian scheme be true then, He hath actually done this. Christ \* is raised from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. While, as by man † came death, by man cometh also the resurrection of the dead; in as much as it is appointed that at his voice

\* 1 Cor. xv. 20.

† ver. 21.



voice\* *all* that are in the grave shall hereafter come forth; when God will judge the world in righteousness by that man † whom he hath ordained, who will then declare the divine approbation of all the pious and good, and take them to dwell for ever with himself. Is not this the plain, intellible, and unperturbed doctrine of the New Testament? If it is, I appeal to yourselves, whether there is any thing in the Unitarian System which undermines the ground of your comfort; or rather, whether it is not even more secure upon this system than upon any other.

And now, my christian friends, judge for yourselves, whether this system deserves to be vilified as stripping christianity of every thing fundamental to it. If the ground of christian faith, obedience and comfort remains uninjured by it; yea, is rendered by it more firm than by any other system of divinity, where is the damage or loss that christianity sustains from it? Nothing, surely, but ignorance of the real system can have given birth to the unjust aspersions that have been cast upon it.

§ 8. But, in the last place, it will surely be allowed that the great end of the christian revelation is to engage men to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world. I ask then, once more, whether the Unitarian System does not afford some peculiar assistance in, or encouragement to, such a life? You know that both reason and revelation enjoin the worship  
of

\* John v. 28.

† Acts xvii. 31.

of God. Now does not the Unitarian System remove the insuperable embarrassment with which the exercises of devotion are attended according to the Trinitarian Scheme; by which you are led to worship you know not what, sometimes one Person, and sometimes three? Again the New Testament inculcates a variety of duties as of the highest obligation, and of indispensable necessity. Is it not, upon the Unitarian System, a considerable encouragement to the practice of them, that you see them discharged, in the most exemplary manner, as far as the difference of situations would permit, by a man, who nobly resisted temptations similar to what you experience, and was eminent for the practice of virtues which are recommended to you? Farther, as the Unitarian System rejects the notion of a full satisfaction paid to divine justice for the sins of men, does it not enforce the necessity of personal holiness in a manner peculiarly strong? And, as it teaches that the pardon of sin, and eternal life and happiness, are the gifts of God's original mercy and love, bestowed freely, and not bought at the full price; does it not lay a foundation, such as the scheme of satisfaction cannot afford, for the exercise of that gratitude and love to God, which are the most powerful, the most pleasing, and the most acceptable principles of obedience? And lastly, as upon this supposition, you see distinguished piety and goodness most gloriously rewarded in the person of a man; have you not here  
the

the strongest possible motive to be steadfast and unmoveable in it? I ask yourselves, are not these very great assistances in, and encouragements to, a life of christian obedience; and such as are really peculiar to the Unitarian Scheme?

Upon the whole then, with how little reason is it, that this system is held up to public abhorrence, as if it struck at the foundation of christianity, and was designed to defeat the great end of the gospel and destroy its influence in the world! I hope, my christian friends, you see, that it retains every thing essential to christianity, and that its defenders may be at least as good christians as its opponents. Be not then frightened by hard names, from considering it attentively, and enquiring what there is to be said for it. Read the scriptures for yourselves; and see whether, taking in *the whole* of what they teach on any particular subject, there is not reason to believe, that upon the whole they are favourable to it. Consider the system itself; and see, whether, instead of degrading God, it does not represent him in a light peculiarly venerable and amiable; whether, instead of vilifying the Saviour, it does not ascribe to him the highest honour to which he is really entitled; whether, instead of undermining christianity, or stripping it of its fundamental doctrines, it does not hold forth gospel-truth in its native purity and glory; whether, instead of pouring contempt on scripture, it does not afford the most consistent and honourable

able view of its contents. Consider what is to be said in behalf of it ; and see, whether there be not reason at least to behold the defenders of it with much more good-will than you are at present inclined to treat them with, yea, whether there be not some reason to think that the balance of argument is in their favour. You may believe me, my friends, there was a time, when christians of your class were as much astonished at and shocked by the proposal of the Trinitarian Scheme (as the patrons of that very scheme acknowledged) as you can possibly be at present by the mention of the opposite one. It was not with such as you, but with the Heathen Philosophers who had been converted to christianity, that the apostacy from the faith at first delivered to the saints began. And, 'till those additions to the gospel, which they first introduced, are entirely done away, its best friends do not expect that it will ever appear in its original glory, or exert its original influence on mankind. Accept the affectionate wish of a sincere friend to christianity and to you, that you may be led into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and that his glorious gospel, rightly understood and dutifully obeyed, may become the power of God to your salvation.

AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.





A  
REPRESENTATION  
OF THE NATURE OF  
TRUE RELIGION.

Addressed to a LADY.

First published in the Year 1697.

TO WHICH IS ADDED A  
SHORT EXPLANATION  
Of the END and DESIGN of the  
LORD'S SUPPER.

Taken from a Treatise on that Subject, printed at  
London, for W. Johnston, 1760.

---

*This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*

1 John v. 3.

*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that  
loveth me.*

John xiv. 21.

---

L O N D O N:  
PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCIII.

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE STATE OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

## To the READER.

*WHEN the following small Tract first appeared, it was intitled, "A LADY'S RELIGION." It was originally drawn up by a Divine of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, for the use, it has been supposed, of the Honourable Lady HOWARD, and has not only been re printed more than once at home, but translated into several modern languages. The second edition of it came out in the year 1704, when another letter upon the same subject was added to it; and in the year 1748, a third edition of it was published by the Rev. FERDINANDO WARNER, who, besides a preface, in which some account is given of the design and merits of the performance, prefixed to it a large extract from the preface to the French translation, and annexed to it a letter of his own to a lady under a very painful domestick affliction.*

*The first of the abovementioned letters, appearing to be the whole of what the author intended when he began to write upon this important subject, and having no necessary connection with any thing which has been since joined with it, is here published by itself, with a view to its being rendered more extensively useful. The edition, from which it is copied, is that of 1748, which has been carefully adhered to, excepting in the title, which perhaps was not the most happily chosen, and an expression or two relating to devotion, of which some might have made an use which the author certainly never designed.*



*It is only needful to say, further, that the republication of this small Tract, and what is added to it, proceeds from no other principle than a desire to assist those, into whose hands it may come, to form just apprehensions of that RELIGION which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father; to set before them, in an easy view, the wisdom of the doctrine of our Saviour, and to remove those groundless apprehensions concerning the nature of any of his institutions, by which persons are, either totally kept from them, or led to attend on them, with a terror, for which no upright mind can ever have the least occasion, and which, if they were able to view the services of the gospel in a juster light, would be exchanged for satisfaction and joy.*

A

## REPRESENTATION, &c.

MADAM,

SINCE God has been pleased to incline your heart to an early and serious enquiry after religion, so that you are sincerely desirous to know the will of God, in order to do it, I heartily wish you had laid your commands upon one more able to assist you than I am; who, being bred up in an age of speculation and controversy, have addicted myself to the study of divinity, more perhaps than to the practice of religion; and have been (I pray God forgive me) more desirous to furnish my head with notions, than my heart with good inclinations. I thought myself, by my profession, chiefly engaged in a study, how to defend the church, by law established, against all dissenters, rather than to promote the common cause of serious piety; and whilst by the strange unaccountable genius of this age, I have been led aside to mix the study of politics with that of religion, I have been busily assisting the office of a minister of state, rather than doing the good work of a minister of *Jesus Christ*.

B 3

Now

Now although it has pleased God to make me in some measure sensible of those bye paths, in which I have sometimes walked, to the hinderance of that duty unto which I ought intirely to have devoted myself; yet I am apt to fear lest those prejudices and undue prepossessions of mind may still remain within me, by which I shall be prevented from giving your Ladyship such an idea of religion, as is short, plain, and pure, free from superstitious appendages, and separate from every bye-interest.

But, without doubt, such as this is the true spirit of the christian religion; every line whereof directly tends to make us easy within ourselves, kind and comfortable to one another here, and happy with God hereafter.

That our holy religion is a wise institution, will be evident to any one who considers that God is its author, whose wisdom appears in all his works: Thus the frame of visible nature being agreeably set together, and having each part of it suited to usefule and proper ends, demonstrates it to be the work of divine wisdom: In like manner the whole plan of pure religion, having also its parts suitable to each other, and every one of them agreeably set to the same good and great design of the whole, does thereby prove itself to be the contrivance of an all-wise God.

And hereby the wisdom of the Christian Religion will particularly appear, because every part of it  
tends

tends to promote the universal good of mankind ; for which reason, the divine founder thereof was named *Jesus*, that is, *Saviour* ; because his only design was to save us from the prevailing power of sin, and from those miseries which that evil power would involve us in.

Thus *temperance* promotes our health ; *justice* in our dealings, prevents us from sustaining the revenges of the injured, and gains us trust among men, with all the benefits which arise from thence. *Charity*, by promoting the common good of others, draws back their love and affection to ourselves ; while *patience* preserves quiet within our own breasts, and *self-denial*, by restraining our extravagant appetites, establishes the just power of reason over us, thereby fitting us for all conditions of life. And thus the law of *Christ* answers to the character of wisdom, by its agreeableness to the best design of man ; and upon this account *Solomon* characterized the idea of religion under the name of wisdom.

Besides these moral duties, there are several threats of God's judgments, and promises of his favour, contained in Christ's institution ; the former were wisely designed to restrain us from immoralities, which are our greatest follies ; and the latter to engage us in the practice of virtue, which is our greatest wisdom : The threatenings prepare the way for the promises, and qualify us to receive them ; inasmuch as they shake off our affections



fections from ill objects, in order for the promises to fix them upon good ones. We must needs cease to do evil, before we can learn to do well.

Now although a due consideration of the divine nature, will carry us on to the belief of a future state, in which he who is in perfection the best of all beings, will distinguish the good from the bad by ample rewards and just punishments; yet because every one's capacity may not be sufficient to make this wise reflection, therefore *Jefus Christ* was pleased (as the gospel phrases it) *to bring life and immortality to light*; that is, to give the world full assurance of a future state, in which the just God will distinguish men hereafter, in such a manner as they shall distinguish themselves here; and it is the wisdom of every one to preserve this belief in his heart, and bear it always about him, because it is the most awful monitor against our committing folly, and yields the strongest encouragement to virtue.

From what has been said, your Ladyship sees first, what is meant by *saving a soul*, viz. to deliver it from vicious habits and fearful punishments, the fatal consequents of such habits; and by establishing virtue therein, to recommend it to the favour of God. And, secondly, that the gospel of Christ was designed to this very end; and its tendency hereunto is its wisdom. And, thirdly, from hence you also perceive, in what respect faith in *Jefus Christ*,

*Christ*, is said to save us, *viz.* because this faith is our receiving the christian moral for the rule of our lives, and the threats and promises contained in the gospel, for the outward motives of our practice, according to that rule.

And from these three considerations, summed up together, you may examine all the various pretences which differing churches and communions make to the purity of christian faith, so as to form a right judgment of them; for, that communion which manifests itself to have no other design, than to assist its members in saving their souls from the power of sin, by the moral and motives aforementioned, is certainly the purest faith. So that if you form yourself upon this principle, you may pass by all nice speculations, or profound mysteries which have no direct tendency to improve your morals, without any hazard of salvation.

*Secondly*, As the christian institution is wisely practical, so it is plain: Or, in other words, we may say, that as the wisdom of the christian religion appears first by its being *practical*, so it appears, secondly, by being *plain*. The obscure answers which were given out from the old heathen oracles, are now known to have proceeded from the indirectness of a designing priesthood: Who, to maintain their pretence of foretelling what shall come to pass, sent back all those who came to enquire after future events, with doubtful and uncertain

certain answers. And it has been the observation of wise men, that when any one affects to be dark and mysterious in his conversation, either he has some indirect design in so doing, or else whilst he makes an ostentation of wisdom, he does in reality but discover his folly.

Now the wisdom of God cannot be conceived to aim at any other design in communicating itself to us, than the information of our minds in the nature of good and evil, and this in order to direct our choice; and all instruction must of necessity be plain; since it is by things easy and familiar, such as at first sight we may apprehend, whereby we can be led on to the knowledgs of matters more remote and difficult: But obscure and unintelligible doctrines, can have no effect upon us beside unprofitable amusement; and *whatsoever is by the wisdom of God laid out of our reach, can be no part of our concern.*

Farther, to what end did he give us intellectual faculties? surely not to amuse, but to improve us, by enabling us thoroughly to understand each part of our holy religion, which directly tends to that end, *viz.* our moral improvement; as you will soon perceive, if you reduce the christian institution to its general heads, which are these.

*First,* A narration of matters of fact.

*Secondly,* A declaration of moral laws.

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly*, A revelation of such motives which are proper to enforce this law upon our minds. And,

*Fourthly*, Serious exhortations to refresh our memories with our duty ; and earnestly to recommend it to our practice.

*First*, Your Ladyship sees, that the matters of fact contained in the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles (*viz.* the travels and transactions of Christ and his disciples) are so plainly related, that you understand the relation as easily as you read it. And, *Secondly*, All laws *must* be plain, because they are directions. Now, obscure directions are but delusions ; and *laws* which are dubious and difficult to be understood, are *traps* and *snare*s. And, *Thirdly*, It is as necessary that *motives* should be very intelligible, because their design is to work strongly upon our wills, by convincing our understandings. Add to this, *Fourthly*, That mystical and unintelligible *exhortations*, are ridiculous ; upon which account, St. *Paul* forbid religious exercises to be performed in an unknown tongue.

Now as the four Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles, contain matters of facts, laws, and motives ; so the Epistles, contain exhortations to seriousness and piety, arising from the laws, facts, and motives before mentioned : and I take these books to be sufficiently comprehensive of the institutions and ordinances of Jesus Christ ; which ought indeed to be easily intelligible, because they  
concern



concern the poor, weak, and unlettered people, as much as the learned.

Nor can I see that the doctrine of Christ, was by him or his apostles, delivered first of all into the hands of the learned, to be by them conveyed into the minds of the ignorant ; but, on the contrary, it is manifest, that our Saviour directed both his discourses and actions, immediately to the common people, as to the scribes ; and, in like manner, did his disciples address their preachings and writings.

From all this discourse, concerning the clearness of Christ's institution, you may learn, that you may spare yourself the needless trouble of reading abstruse and mysterious points of divinity. Nor need you suffer yourself to be amused with the pretended deep speculations of profound men, when you have the plain directions of a wise and good God before you, in following whereof you shall meet with great reward.

*Thirdly*, The christian institution is short. True and genuine religion has always been summed up, and gathered together into a narrow compass, by those who best understood it. Thus *Micah* (vi. 8.) speaking of God, saith, *He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee ? but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* And our Saviour sums up the whole law, in our love to God, and  
our

our neighbour : And in another place, includes the whole scope of the law and the prophets, in this one rule, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them* ; hereby directing us to make a right use of that reason, which God established as his oracle in our breasts ; to which we may at all times resort, and from whence we may be resolved, in such cases as concern our duty to one another.

For as by consulting your own reason, you know wherein you are justly dealt with, and wherein you receive wrong ; when you are kindly used, and when otherwise ; so from the same principle of reason, you cannot but know, when you deal justly or wrongfully, and when you do kind or ill offices to another : This one short comprehensive rule, taking for its foundation the equality of mankind, in respect of their common nature, renders religion itself a matter *sensible* unto us.

For I can feel the wound of a sharp slanderous tongue, as sensibly as that of a sword ; I can feel the wrongs done to myself and family ; and am as much sensible of the benefits I enjoy, from the just and kind dealings of those with whom I am concerned ; and hereby, I am in the shortest and plainest way, admonished of my behaviour to others : And if this one short rule were reduced to practice, the state of Paradise would be restored, and we should enjoy a heaven upon earth.

For hereby, *First*, all persecutions for conscience sake, which have occasioned such violent disorders, and vast effusion of blood, would be at an end; because every one who has any conscience, would most willingly preserve it free from the impositions of men in the worship of God. To compel men by fire and faggot, to partake even of a delicious entertainment, is a savage sort of hospitality.

*Secondly*, All factions in any state would be at an end, if every member thereof were contented, that every one of his fellow-members, who was not an enemy to the government, might, having equal pretence of merit, enjoy equal privileges with himself.

*Thirdly*, The occasions of war, and law-suits, would be taken away; since nothing but manifest wrong, can be the just cause of either.

And, *Fourthly*, There would be no private quarrels, and uneasiness among neighbours; since by this rule of doing as we would be done unto, all rash censures, sharp reflections, and ungrounded suspicions and jealousies, which are the seeds of private animosities, are taken away. And hereby we may expect a plentiful store of God's blessings among us, who will measure out his kindness to us, in the same manner as we measure out ours to one another.

The reason why religion should be both a short and plain institution, will appear if you consider the

the common circumstances and conditions of men in this world. For though your Ladyship and many more, have leisure enough to read and digest whole volumes of useful knowledge (if there be any such) yet the greatest part of mankind, being necessarily employed in making daily provisions for themselves and families, and discharging the common offices of life, cannot attend to any religious institution, which is either difficult or tedious.

It is certain, that the whole life of man, is not sufficient for him to read all the controversies which have been written, upon pretence of religion; but it is as certain, that God never lays on us a greater task, than what he affords us both abilities and opportunities to perform; wherefore we may conclude, that since the duties of religion are laid in common upon all, the poor day-labourer must have ability and opportunity, sufficient to instruct himself therein, without hindering the constant work of his calling. And in all this the wisdom and goodness of God are made known by adapting our duties to our circumstances of life.

From hence you may see that you may save yourself the trouble of reading the long and tedious disputes, which, with such intemperate zeal, are always in agitation among the several parties of christians. Indeed the true christian institution being short, it cannot admit of being spun out into



long controversies: And, though I have read many books of controversial divinity, I do not remember, that I have met with any one controversy, about the matter of *mere* religion; as whether I should maintain in my heart, a high reverence and veneration for Almighty God; whether I ought to walk before him in sincerity and uprightness; whether or no I should be thankful to him, for all the benefits which I have received from him; whether I shall submit to his will with patience, and endeavour to govern my passions; to bring them to a due moderation and temper, by making them subject to the law of reason; whether I should be true to my promise, just in my dealings, charitable to the poor, and sincere in my devotions; whether I should be temperate and sober, modest and chaste, and demean myself in an humble, civil, and agreeable manner, towards those with whom I converse; whether I should be heartily sorry when I come short of my duty, and should be watchful in the denial of my irregular appetites, passions, and evil inclinations for the future; in short, it has not (that I know of) been disputed, whether justice, benignity, meekness, charity, moderation, patience, and sobriety, should be received into our affections; or whether we should love God, and our neighbour; *orthodoxy of faith* is made the pretence of controversy, but the one thing necessary, is *orthodoxy of practice*.

I know

I know your Ladyship will not be pleased with a discourse upon the subject of religion, unless devotion has its due place in it; nor ought it indeed to be left out; because thankfulness is a necessary part of religion, and prayer is the *preservative* of the whole. A frequent repetition of our thanks for all the benefits we enjoy, preserves in our minds the consideration of God, as the greatest and best of beings; and thereby nourishes veneration and gratitude. In like manner prayer for pardon of sin, and for preservation of our persons, is a constant recognition of the mercy and bounty of God. But prayer against the power of sin, is the actual withdrawing of our inclinations from evil; and prayer for any grace, is an actual application of our minds, to attain the particular virtue for which we pray.

But together with these more direct and solemn exercises, and seasons of devotion of which I have been speaking, I would earnestly recommend to you to accustom yourself to a *sort of habitual and occasional devotion*, as very proper to preserve the strongest impressions of religion upon your mind.

It may be observed, that many who are very punctual in keeping to their exact times and forms of devotion, have fallen short of any visible improvement in virtue. The same pride, forwardness, fallshood, covetousness, and bitterness of spirit, have appeared in many who have been

constant frequenters of the public, as well as closet forms of prayer; *as if God had not been in all their thoughts*; the reason whereof seems to be, because their formal petitions supercede their habitual endeavours. Men are apt to think, that since they spend in every day, such a portion of time in prayer, they have done all their part; and so they leave God-Almighty to take care of the event. And this is indeed all we *can* do, when we make our petitions to our benefactors upon earth, *viz.* offer up our requests to them, either by word or writing, and then only expect their answer.

But 'tis otherwise with relation to God. Our petitions to *him*, must not take off from our constant endeavours to perform that work, for which we pray his enablement. And this occasional devotion, which I would recommend, is in its own nature a constant endeavour after virtue, as well as a serious petition for it. For it ariseth from a frequent observation of ourselves, in our particular occurring circumstances; from which observation suitable desires will almost necessarily flow. As if at any time I find that I have done an ill thing, immediately upon the discovery, I beg God's pardon, and resolve to make recompence for the ill I have done: Or, if I have designed any evil in my heart, and presently beg pardon of him who knoweth the secrets thereof; in so doing I have given check to its progress. In like manner, if I have spoken  
flanderously,

slandrously, rashly, or injuriously concerning any one, and upon recollection thereof, I ask forgiveness of God, and desire that I may not do the like for the future, but on the contrary, that I may govern my tongue better; in all this, I am labouring to withdraw my soul from evil, and to form myself upon a principle of virtue.

Every night, and morning, are proper times of leisure, to call to mind the preservation, support, and advantages, we have received the day, or night preceding. And this recollection, being accompanied with thankfulness to our great Preserver, is the actual continuance and carrying on of our gratitude to God. If I perceive pride, or passion, to arise in my heart, so that I am apt to put a great value upon every thing I do, and despise others: Or, if I find myself eagerly concerned for any little worldly advantage, or any small punctilio of honour; and hereupon I beg of God for an humble spirit, and a heavenly mind; I am herein endeavouring to expel the poison of sin, by its proper antidote.

We cannot but feel the disorder of our minds, as much as the diseases of our bodies. And the causes of a disordered mind, are much more easily discerned, than the causes of a bodily distemper. For either my mind is troubled for want, or losses, or it may be for the prosperity of others, or I want a revenge, or because I cannot have my will in  
what



what I designed. Upon these, or such like occasions, the proper cure is devotional, in begging God's pardon for my discontent ; and being desirous that my will should be submitted to his, who has taught me that I should not return evil for evil, but that I should love my neighbour as myself. This sort of soliloquy, and occasional mental address to God, is a sure way to compose the disorders of our thoughts. For the growing power of any sin, is most certainly suppressed, by introducing the opposite virtue into our desires.

The same method may be used as to sins of omission. A serious person will observe neglects of common duties, which respect either God, or man. He cannot but take notice, how much he has neglected his business, or his health ; how little he has considered God as his owner, governor, and benefactor ; and how small a portion of what God has blessed him with, he has laid out upon the good of his fellow-creatures. And if hereupon, a man is seriously desirous to become more dutiful to God, more useful to himself, and beneficial to others, he is therein actually bending his mind to supply his former omissions.

This casual devotion, arising from the observation of ourselves, under the common circumstances of life, (although it can have no set times and forms prescribed to it,) will be very effectual to produce, preserve, and increase, a true sense of religion

religion within us. And if you are pleased to apply your thoughts hereunto, as occasion shall direct you, this devotion will soon become habitual, customary and easy. And its returns, which will be frequent and short, will be a continual restraint from evil-doing, and an actual exercise of virtue.

This exercise which I have been prescribing, is commonly reserved to be performed all at once, in an actual preparation before receiving the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; which is usually performed, by help of an artificial catalogue of sins, methodically collected out of the ten commandments; according to which catalogue, set forms of confessions are drawn up, which the preparant is to take upon content; and without any sort of judgment or discretion of his own, he confesses himself guilty of the sins therein mentioned together, with all their aggravations, tho' it may be, many of them were of such a heinous nature, as never entered into his heart to commit. And if these catalogues, and confessional forms, are read over once a quarter of a year, or, it may be, once a month, against the usual sacrament-day, the work of preparation is thought to be well passed over.

Yet I cannot but think it better, to keep a constant customary watch over ourselves, and upon the first discovery of any evil design or action, immediately to retract it within our own hearts, as in the presence of God; and by mental prayer,  
proper

proper to the occasion, arm ourselves against committing the like for the future. Hereby you discharge a duty in its proper season, which is better than to delay it to a prefixed distance of time; for what is most fresh in memory, will make the most lively impression upon us, but may in a little time be forgotten. Besides, we are apt to turn forms into formalities; and a *natural* discharge of religious duties, must be more improving than an *artificial* one.

And by this your Ladyship sees the reason, why I have written a discourse of *religion* in general, in answer to your letter, wherein you wrote only concerning the *Lord's Supper*, viz. because I esteem a serious well-inclined temper of mind, to be the best preparation, either for that, or any other of the ordinances of Jesus Christ, that we may partake of them with advantage and delight.

*David* advises us to delight ourselves in the Lord; *that is*, in all his ways and ordinances. And I cannot see, why our preparation for the Lord's table, and participation at it, should be accompanied with greater anxieties of mind, than our communicating in any other holy office; such as public prayer, or preaching. We expect the same blessing of God, in the improvement of our virtues, from all of these ordinances alike. And why with terror upon our minds we should use any of those means, which God has ordained for our good, I  
do



do not understand. A man indeed ought to perform every religious office, seriously, and soberly; but fear, by amusing and distracting the mind, is apt to render the ordinance unprofitable.

Men ought likewise to be discouraged from coming to prayer, preaching, or communicating at the Lord's table, with a careless, or profane temper of mind; because such unpreparedness, does harden men's hearts, and renders the ordinance unprofitable. Such as this was the case of the *Corinthians*, who in celebrating the *Lord's Supper*, were so inconsiderate of what they came to do, that some of them were *drunk* at the Lord's table, as you read, 1 *Cor.* xi. 21. and to this their profane behaviour, those texts of scripture do particularly relate, which affright some men from, and others in, receiving the sacrament: On this account it was said, by St. Paul, *That they were guilty of the body and blood of Christ: and did eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body*, ver. 27, 29, *that is*, by such a profane and unworthy communicating, they called down God's *judgments* upon themselves; for so the word *damnation* ought to be understood, because it refers to the *judgments* specified in the following verse, where it is said, that, *For this cause, (viz. of drunken communicating) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep, that is, die*, ver. 30. Now to avoid these *judgments*, he exhorts them to *examine themselves*, that is, to consider with themselves,



selves, what was the meaning of that duty which they were to perform at the Lord's table ; which duty was this, *viz.* to call to mind the death of Jesus Christ. And this commemoration is by St. Paul, stiled, *Discerning the Lord's body.*"

The visible signs of our Saviour's death, which we discern on the Lord's table, do prepare our minds to contemplate a divine person, who for his great charity to the stupid world, suffered the highest injustice, with such an invincible patience, and heroic fortitude, as was superior to the sharpest malice of his enemies ; thereby setting before us the brightest example, of an unshaken resolution to do good, in spite of all discouragements.

You will perceive, Madam, by this discourse, that the christian religion is a wise, a plain, and a short institution ; the belief whereof was designed to save our souls from the power and danger of sin, by ingrafting virtuous habits in our minds. You will likewise perceive, that I hold it necessary to keep a constant watch over ourselves, to repent as often as we perceive ourselves to transgress, and by occasional mental devotion, incline our hearts to observe the law of Christ ; and all this in order to build up a habit of virtue within us. You will also perceive, that the contemplation of the death of Christ, with all its circumstances, tends to the same admirable end.

And

And if these, or any other means, shall work upon you to be generously just, to bear a good will to all men, to do what good you can, and to be unconcerned for the events of things which are not within your power; you will be easy within yourself, and satisfied in your own conscience; which is the dawn of heaven upon earth, and you may cheerfully communicate at any time.

and it is a very old one  
it is the property of the  
British Museum and is  
the only one of its kind  
in the world. It is a  
very rare and valuable  
one and is the only one  
of its kind in the world.

A SHORT  
 EXPLANATION  
 OF THE  
 END AND DESIGN  
 OF  
 THE LORD'S SUPPER.

---

THIS ordinance, which is commonly called the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, and sometimes the Eucharist, is not an invention of men, or a ceremony devised by christians out of their own heads, or instituted by the clergy of their own authority: but is an exprefs institution and command of our Lord himself, who hath appointed it to be observed and celebrated, in a devout and religious manner, by all his disciples, to the end of the world.

This is abundantly evident from the history of our Saviour's passion, as it is recorded in the gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; and from what the apostle *Paul* says to the church of *Corinth*, in the



11th chapter of his first epistle to them ; where reproving them for some abuses they had been guilty of in the celebration of this ordinance, contrary to the design for which it was appointed, he acquaints them, that he had received it from the Lord as an institution of his religion, which he was to teach as suitable to the churches he should plant, to be observed by them, and by all the churches of *Christ*, till his second coming ; and he tells them that he had accordingly delivered it unto them as he had received it from the Lord ; and then he proceeds to give them an account of its first institution, and of the end and design for which it was appointed, and exhorts them to observe it for the future according to that, and not suffer it to be any longer perverted and abused, as it had been among them of late.

The action itself consists in taking bread, giving thanks over it, breaking it, and eating of it ; then in taking a cup into which wine had been poured, giving thanks over it, and drinking of it.

This is the external action : and the design of it as a religious rite or ceremony, is to represent, shew forth, or make an open public commemoration of our Saviour's death, and the manner of it ; the bread which is broken being a symbol or representation of his body which was broken on the tree ; and the wine, a symbol or representation of his

his blood shed upon the cross, for the remission of the sins of many; that is, for the confirmation of that covenant wherein God hath promised the remission of sins to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who sincerely embrace the gospel of his Son, who truly repent of their sins and forsake them, and carefully endeavour for the future to obey his holy laws, and improve themselves daily in piety and virtue.

Whether the bread that is used in the celebration of this ordinance be leavened or unleavened; whether the wine be pure or mixed with water; whether the thanksgiving be used only once for all, or repeated before the giving of the cup, which seems indeed to have been the practice at the beginning; whether this institution be celebrated in the evening, or any other time of the day; whether fasting, or after a temperate meal; whether in an upper room, or in any other place; whether sitting, or leaning, or standing, or kneeling; these and the like circumstances being no parts of the action itself, nor having any relation to, or connection with, the design of it, are matters of indifferency, and left to the liberty of christians: there is nothing determined about them in the New Testament, and therefore none should take upon them to make any fixed regulations or canons about such matters; but in these or the like indifferent things, which are not necessary to be determined, every christian

should be left to his own discretion; for the institution may be duly and rightly administered, and christians may partake of it worthily and acceptably, either in the one or the other of these ways that have been mentioned; yea even though in the same congregation, and at the same time, some should receive it one way, and some another; christians should not be superstitiously scrupulous about these little things; nor should christian churches take upon them to exercise authority in matters of this nature, which are not determined in the word of God, which do not belong to the action itself nor affect any of the ends and purposes for which it was appointed, and which are chiefly to be regarded in our celebration of it.

From the accounts we have of the institution of this ordinance, both by the evangelists and the apostle *Paul*, we plainly see for what end it was appointed, and consequently with what views, with what dispositions and affections we ought to partake of it; for the efficacy of it, or the good to be obtained by the receiving of it, doth not depend upon the mere external action of eating and drinking; but upon the doing it with meditations and affections suitable to the design for which it was instituted.

Now the chief and principal end for which this rite was appointed by our Lord, was to be a standing memorial of his sufferings and death, and a  
solemn

solemn publick commemoration of them with praise and thanksgiving : *This* (saith he) *is my body, which is broken for you* ; as much as to say, this bread which is broken and distributed among you, is the symbol, or the sign and representation of my body crucified and broken for you ; *Do this*, that is, *take it, and eat of it, in remembrance of me*, or for a commemoration of my love in dying for you. And of the cup he says, *This cup is the New Testament*, or, as it should rather have been rendered, *the new covenant in my blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many, drink ye all of it ; for as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth, or shew ye forth the Lord's death till he come*. The meaning is, the wine contained in this cup is the symbol, the sign and representation of my blood, shed for the confirmation of the new covenant, wherein the remission of sins is promised and assured to all, who, becoming my disciples and members of my church, shall truly repent of their sins and forsake them, and shall endeavour for the future to yield a sincere obedience to the laws and precepts of my gospel, and persevere therein to the end : drink ye all of this cup in remembrance of me, for by this action of eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup, as the symbols and representations of my body broken and blood shed, ye do shew forth and publickly declare my death, and your own thankful remembrance



brance of it; and it is my will you should do so to the end of the world, even till I shall come again the second time, without sin, unto salvation, that is, not to offer myself as a sacrifice for sin a second time, but to confer on all my sincere and faithful followers, that salvation and happiness which I have promised to them; which promise is sealed with my blood, and farther confirmed by my resurrection from the dead, and ascension into the heavens. This ordinance then is a standing and perpetual memorial, an open and publick commemoration of the sufferings and death of our Lord *Jesus Christ*: and this is the first and principal end for which it was appointed.

But there is another, or rather two others, which naturally arise out of this first one, and are closely connected with it; and which are also pretty plainly taught as such by the apostle *Paul* in *1 Cor. x. 16, 17*. They are these, to wit, to be a token and testimony of our communion and fellowship with *Jesus Christ*, with all our christian brethren; the apostle's words are these, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for, because there is one bread,\* we, being many, are one body, for we are all partakers of that bread.* As if he had said, The cup of thanksgiving, over which we give thanks, and of which we drink, in the celebration of the Lord's  
Supper,

\* So this verse would have been better rendered,

Supper, is it not a token, a public testimony and declaration, of our communion and fellowship with the Lord *Jesus*, whose blood was shed for the remission of sins? and the bread which we break, and eat of in that ordinance, is it not a token, a public testimony and declaration of our communion and fellowship with that blessed Lord whose body was broken for us upon the tree? is not this action which we perform in obedience to his command, a public and solemn acknowledgment of our religious regard to him, as our Saviour and Redeemer, our Lord, our Lawgiver, and our Judge; is it not an open profession in the face of the world that we are his disciples and followers, that we embrace his doctrine and religion, and are not ashamed of his gospel; that we approve of, and agree to, the terms of that most gracious covenant which was sealed with his blood, and sincerely consent to be governed by his laws? undoubtedly it is; and our partaking of this feast in memory of his death, is an open declaration and solemn testimony of all this.

And farther, by our coming together into one place, to partake of this one bread, and drink of this one cup, as a religious commemoration of the death of *Christ*; we, all of us, who join in the celebration of this ordinance, tho' many in number, and dwelling perhaps, some of us in far distant places, do hereby declare that we are all one body,  
and

and acknowledge ourselves, with all our christian brethren wherever they dwell on the face of the earth, to be one society or community, united to the one Lord by a lively faith and sincere obedience, and to one another by the bond of a fervent charity and a brotherly love; and so by the joint partaking of this ordinance we acknowledge ourselves the fellow disciples of Christ, the one Lord and Mediator, and the joint worshippers of the one God and Father of all, the temples of the same holy spirit, and the heirs of the same heavenly inheritance.

We do not by this action profess our communion merely and only with that particular church or congregation with whom we are worshipping at the time, or with that particular party or denomination of christians with whom we are associated, and statedly join in worship; or with this or the other national church; but we acknowledge ourselves to be in union and fellowship with all who make a credible profession of christianity, (that is,) with all who profess the christian religion, and do not contradict that profession by the wickedness of their lives and, that together with them, we are all one body, united under *Christ*, our common head; we are one religious community, one spiritual kingdom under the government of that king whom God hath set over us, even *Jesus Christ* his son, whom he hath made Lord of all, by whose law

laws we all profess to be ruled and governed, to whose authority and dominion we are all subject, and to whom we are all of us accountable for our conduct.

These now being the ends for which this ordinance was appointed, it becomes us, as often as we partake of it, to keep them in our minds, to fix our meditations upon them, and to exercise our affections, and form our purposes and resolutions according to them: if we do so, it will be a means of strengthening our faith and hope, of increasing our love to God, and our love to *Jesus Christ* our blessed Redeemer, and to all the saints and household of God; and it will help us forward in the way of holiness, and engage us more effectually to a patient continuance in well doing, and to the constant and zealous practice of every thing that is truly pious, virtuous and good; in a word, it will dispose us for farther usefulness in this world, and to a greater progress in moral and spiritual perfection, and consequently prepare and qualify us for higher degrees of happiness in the world that is to come.

But if we attend upon this institution of our religion in a careless unthinking manner, only as an empty ceremony, as a matter of form and custom; or to please men, and gain or preserve a reputation of sanctity; or, if we substitute our attendance upon it in the place of real righteousness; and use  
it



it as a kind of commutation, and by way of atonement for some immoral practices we are guilty of; or for any other base and sinister end; we quite pervert it from the purpose for which it was appointed; *we eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body*; we use it in effect as if it were a common meal, and are guilty of profaning a sacred religious institution of divine appointment.

When the apostle *Paul* in the place already quoted, (1 *C.r.* xi. 23, &c.) reproves the Corinthians for certain abuses which had crept in among them in the administration of the Lords's Supper; in order to rectify these abuses, he lays before them a plain and true account of the institution itself, and of the end and design of it, as he had received it from the Lord, who had communicated the whole gospel to him by revelation: after which he adds this advice, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* So our translators have rendered the words, which should have been translated in this manner, *But let a man prove himself*, and THUS, that is, according to what I have now told you is the design of this institution, *thus let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.* As if he had said, I have given you an account of this institution as I received it from the Lord, and of the chief and principal end for which he appointed it; by that let every one examine

examine and try himself, his temper of mind, his views and intentions, his carriage and conduct, and *thus*, according to the end and design of the institution, as a memorial of the death of *Christ*, and a token of communion with him, and with the whole christian church, *let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.*

There is no reason to suppose that the apostle by his direction intended to bind christians to enter into a particular examination of the whole past course of their lives every time that they design to partake of the Lord's Supper : this indeed is an useful exercise, and very proper to be observed sometimes, on some special occasions, and for some persons ; but it does not seem to be necessary for all christians every time they may have an intention to join with their brethren in celebrating the memory of their Saviour's passion by this institution ; there is nothing in this discourse of the apostle, or the occasion upon which he gave these directions to the Corinthian church concerning the Lord's Supper, to lead us to understand the words in that sense ; nor is such a particular examination necessary, every time that a serious well-disposed christian would chuse to receive the communion ; though it is proper here to be observed, that frequent self-examination is a very useful and important duty ; for it serves to shew us, or bring to mind, what is or has been amiss, and needs to be corrected, in our

E

temper

temper or conduct ; it helps us to know ourselves, what manner of persons we are, and what is our true and real character, and this will dispose us to modesty and humility ; it will make us sensible what need we have of God's grace and forgiveness, and the assistance of his holy spirit ; it will dispose us also to the exercise of charity, forbearance, and forgiveness towards others ; and give us occasion of praise and thanksgiving to God for his sparing mercies, and his gracious promises of acceptance upon the most reasonable and condescending terms : beside many other advantages which cannot be mentioned or insisted on at present.

But the examination which the apostle recommends, as previously necessary to the Lord's Supper, so far as may be judged from the context, seems to be this ; that any christian intending to go to the Lord's table, should, in order to partake of that ordinance in a religious manner ; and so as to profit by it, and not incur the guilt of profaning a sacred and solemn institution of religion, appointed by *Christ* himself ; he should (I say) seriously consider the end and design for which it was appointed, and reflect whether the temper of his mind, and frame of his spirit be such as is suitable to that end, and having, upon such serious reflection, found that it is so ; let him accordingly, with a view to that end, and with meditations and affections suitable to it, *eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.*



We should, therefore, before we go to the Lord's table, reflect a little, and think with ourselves, what it is we are going about? what are we going to do? are we only going to eat and drink as at a common meal for the refreshment and support of our bodies? no, this is not the design of the institution; we have houses to eat and drink in for that end, and are not called to assemble together in the church for our common meals; but we are going to celebrate a religious rite appointed by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as a memorial of his dying love, and a public acknowledgment of our being his disciples, who have communion and fellowship with him, and with all our christian brethren, and who purpose, by the help of God's grace, to please and obey him in all things, and to walk in his ways all the days of our lives.

It becomes us then to enquire again, whether we feel in our minds a just sense of the advantages we enjoy by the gospel revelation, and a thankful remembrance of what our blessed Saviour hath done and suffered for us, to deliver us from the power and dominion of sin, and the miseries consequent upon it? whether we do really approve of the terms of that covenant which he hath sealed with his blood, and heartily consent to them? and are truly willing to forsake all sin, all impiety, all vice, wickedness and immorality, and to conform ourselves in our hearts and lives to the laws of godliness,



liness, righteousness, charity and sobriety, as being most excellent in themselves ; and naturally conducive to promote the proper perfection and true happiness of our nature ? and whether we have a sincere love to all our christian brethren, and a communion in heart and affection with all the saints and household of God ? If this be truly and indeed the temper and disposition of our minds, and the frame of our hearts towards God, towards Jesus Christ his son, towards all our fellow christians, and towards true religion, goodness, and virtue, we are suitably disposed, and duly prepared to go to the Lord's table : let every one therefore try himself by this test, and having found his heart to correspond to it, let him, according to the ends for which this sacred feast was appointed, and with a serious view to them, *eat of the bread, and drink of the cup* ; humbly hoping for God's blessing upon him in his religious attendance upon this ordinance ; and for his favourable acceptance of him in this action, done in obedience to the command of his dying Lord, to shew forth his death till he come.

F I N I S.

being  
indu-  
hap-  
fin-  
om-  
aints  
deed  
the  
efus  
ans,  
tue,  
go  
try  
t to  
nds  
with  
ink  
on  
ce;  
his  
his

T H E  
C A T E C H I S T:

O R,  
AN INQUIRY INTO  
THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES,  
CONCERNING THE  
ONLY TRUE GOD,  
AND OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

---

By THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, A. M.

---

— *Instead of receiving the word of God, they set themselves against it, without alleging any other excuse than the length of time wherein they have continued in their errors; as if there were any prescription of time against HIM, who made the world and ages, and to whom all things are present.*

Brandt's Hist. of the Reform. in the Low-  
Countries, Anno 1565, vol. i. p. 159.

---

L O N D O N:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCII.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

It is for the most part taken for granted, in these INQUIRIES, that there is sufficient satisfactory evidence for the facts related in the Old and New Testament. Of the latter, Dr. Lardner's great work, "The Credibility of the Gospel History," and his "Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion," will enable those to judge, who have not leisure or learning to consult ancient authors for themselves. And the divine revelations recorded in the books of the Old Testament, and the facts connected with them, besides their own independent evidence, on which they stand, have great additional weight, and full confirmation given them, to the christian, by their having been seriously believed and received by Jesus and his apostles, who continually refer and appeal to these books, and to the divine authority of Moses and the prophets.

First published in 1781.

# THE CONTENTS.

|                                                                                                                                                       | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| PREFACE.                                                                                                                                              | i.   |
| INQUIRY I.                                                                                                                                            |      |
| <i>Concerning Jesus Christ, and his authority as a Divine Teacher.</i>                                                                                | I    |
| INQUIRY II.                                                                                                                                           |      |
| <i>Whether Jesus Christ taught the same God as Moses?</i>                                                                                             | 6    |
| INQUIRY III.                                                                                                                                          |      |
| <i>Whether the God of the Israelites formerly, and of their descendants the Jews now, be the same with the God of the Christians?</i>                 | 9    |
| INQUIRY IV.                                                                                                                                           |      |
| <i>Whether Jesus Christ taught that he himself was God?</i>                                                                                           | 15   |
| INQUIRY V.                                                                                                                                            |      |
| <i>What it was that our Saviour taught concerning himself?</i>                                                                                        | 17   |
| INQUIRY VI.                                                                                                                                           |      |
| <i>Whether what Christ thus taught concerning himself, is only true of him in one sense; that is, according to his human nature, as it is called?</i> | 21   |
| INQUIRY VII.                                                                                                                                          |      |
| <i>Of the testimony and sentiment of the three former evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, concerning our Saviour Christ.</i>                        | 23   |



## THE CONTENTS.

### INQUIRY VIII.

*Of the testimony and sentiment of the apostle John, concerning our Saviour Christ.*

31

### INQUIRY IX.

*Of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, as it may be collected from St. Luke's second volume, called the Acts.*

44

### INQUIRY X.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle Paul, concerning God and Christ.*

52

### INQUIRY XI.

*Of the doctrine of the apostles James and Peter, concerning God and Christ.*

66

### INQUIRY XII.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle John, in his epistles, concerning God and Christ.*

71

### INQUIRY XIII.

*Of the sentiments and doctrine of Christ and his apostles, concerning the Holy Spirit.*

79

### INQUIRY XIV.

*Of the origin of the very early and lasting errors among christians, concerning God and Christ.*

91

### INQUIRY XV.

*Why such early and lasting corruptions of the gospel have been permitted?*

102

THE

---

---

THE  
P R E F A C E.

*A great departure from the truth among Christ's followers. The design of this work. The use and importance of the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Divine Unity clearly and plainly revealed in them. Mistakes of Mr. Gibbon concerning the Introduction to St. John's gospel. A principal object of Mr. Gibbon's history.*

*To the CHRISTIAN READER.*

ALMOST 1800 years are past since Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, received a divine commission, and by the powers intrusted (a) with

(a) It was after prayer to God for his direction and assistance, that Jesus chose his 12 disciples. Luke vi. 12, 13. Acts i. 2. This last should be translated *after he had given commandment to the apostles, whom he had chosen by the holy Spirit.* See Dr. Benson's History, &c. of the christian religion, vol. 1. p. 13, 14.) Upon this passage Bp. Pearce has this honest note; for he never had any reserves in speaking what appeared to him to be the truth. "Jesus is every where almost represented as acting and speaking by the

with him imparted the same to certain men (*a*) his apostles to teach the knowledge of *the only* (*b*) true God, the Father, and the way to eternal life. These apostles and messengers of the most high God were laborious in fulfilling their great trust, by their travels and preaching in most parts of the then known world, and by their writings which they left

the spirit of God, which (as John says, in ch. iii. 34.) *was not given by measure unto him.*" One wonders the good Bishop should stop here, and not see, that he could be none other but a creature who was thus under the continual guidance of God.

(*a*) John xvii. 18. *As thou (O Father,) has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* Observe here, that in our Saviour's account, and by his own interpretation, *to be sent into the world* does not signify coming immediately from God and another world, into this; but it signifies the receiving of a divine commission as a prophet or teacher; and nothing more. For Christ applies here the same phrase of *being sent into the world*, to his chosen disciples, 23 to himself.

(*b*) — xvii. 1, 3. *O Father! this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent; or to know, Jesus whom Thou hast sent, to be the Christ; εν απεστειλας, Ιησουν, Χριστον* as this last clause may more justly be translated.

The following remark of our countryman Mr. John Biddle, M.A. of the university of Oxford, a person  
of

left behind them, and which still remain; and great success attended their labours. But the doctrine of the Divine Unity began to be corrupted very soon by heathen inventions: and the greater part of christians have now for many ages acknowledged and worshiped two other persons as gods equal to the Father, who is God alone blessed for ever; by which Jews, Mahometans, and serious

B 2

Deists

of eminent learning and piety, written 140 years ago, merits more attention than hath hitherto been paid it, as do all his valuable works: “ Though *Luther* and *Calvin*, saith he, deserve much praise for the pains they took in cleansing our religion from sundry idolatrous pollutions of the roman Antichrist, yet are the dregs still left behind: I mean the gross opinion touching *three persons in one God*. Which error not only made way for those pollutions, but lying at the bottom, corrupteth almost our whole religion. For first, it introduceth *three Gods*, and so subverteth the *Unity of God*, so frequently inculcated in the scripture. Neither is it enough for the salving this absurdity, to say with *Athanasius*, that *though the Father be God, the Son God, and the holy Spirit God; yet there are not three Gods but one God*. For who is there, if at least he dare make use of reason in his religion, who seeth not that this is as ridiculous, as if one should say, *Peter is an apostle, James an apostle, John an apostle; yet there are not three apostles, but one apostle, &c.*”

A Confession of Faith touching the Holy Trinity. Preface. London, 1648.



Deists have been rendered averse to the gospel, and its first divine teachers discredited, as if they either did not understand this prime capital article of all true religion, or did not express themselves clearly and properly about it.

This little book, Reader, proposeth to remove this unjust aspersions thrown upon the gospel; and to shew, by plain and easy deductions from the scriptures, that Jesus and his apostles knew no other God, but the Father; and also, that they never taught that there was any other Being or Person, to whom we were to offer up our prayers, but this heavenly Father of Jesus, and of us all. And it cannot but be desirable for us, to be assured, upon the best grounds, who is the God that made us, and to whom we are to direct our prayers.

Errors so deeply rooted and of such long standing, as those which are here opposed, cannot be expected to be relinquished all at once. But upon the young and unprejudiced, it may be hoped that the plain arguments of scripture, and strong repeated declarations of Christ and his apostles, will not be wholly lost.

If then, by what is here delivered from the authority of the acknowledged word of God, you shall perceive and learn, that you have been hitherto all your life worshipping those that are no gods, and who cannot hear, or help you: the use that you are bound to make of it is, henceforth to worship  
and

and pray to God, the Father only, in your public as well as private devotions; and to render to the blessed Jesus, all the reverence, love, and honour, due to him, and especially that obedience to the precepts of the gospel, which he (*a*) required from all his followers: but at the same time to remember, that piety and virtue are above all knowledge; and that it is not so much by our zeal for any doctrines, however important, as by our love to (*b*) our brethren of mankind, that we are to approve ourselves Christ's true disciples.

It is an advantage not sufficiently valued, which we reap from the sacred writings, that we are therein assured, by indubitable divine authority, that there is a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness at the head of all things, who claims the devout homage, love, and confidence of his creatures.

For want of such written authentic monuments of this great truth as are contained in *the Bible*, we see in what darkness and ignorance the different nations of the earth were involved in antient times. If some few individuals amongst them were more

B 3

enlightened,

(*a*) John xiv. 15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* N.B. He never commanded men to worship himself.

(*b*) *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* John xiii. 35,

enlightened, (as to the rational inquiring (a) mind the existence of a first cause of all things wise and good is legible in the *great Bible of the universe* in the brightest characters;) their knowlege was of little service to others. They themselves joined and encouraged the people in the worship of their false gods, whom they derided in private among their select friends; but had not the virtue or courage to speak aloud.

In our own times, among those who reject the scriptures, we rarely meet with any practical regards towards God, or worship of Him. Some are found to entertain gloomy doubts of the existence of a creating and governing Mind; whilst others, beset with dark and narrow prejudices, take upon them to call in question the goodness of the benevolent

(a) "The plain argument for the existence of the Deity obvious to all, and carrying irresistible conviction with it, arises from the evident contrivance and fitness of things for one another, which we meet with throughout all the parts of the universe. There is no need of nice or subtle reasonings in this matter: a manifest contrivance immediately suggests a contriver. The admirable and beautiful structure of things for final causes exalts our idea of the *Contriver*: the unity of the design shews him to be *One*." &c. *Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries*, 8vo. p. 400.



lent Parent of all, and will not allow the world to be so well made, or its inhabitants so happy as they ought to be.

That there should have been and subsisted, even among christians, so long, such a strange confused misconception concerning the Deity, that HE is not one Person, one single intelligent Agent, but three Persons, three intelligent Agents: has not been owing to Divine Revelation, or to any obscurity or hesitation in it about this point. For that there is one all-perfect Being, the father, creator, governor and preserver of the universe, is not a point so difficult of comprehension, but that the commonest understanding might see and retain it, when made known, as it is made known in the books of Moses and the hebrew prophets. This is apparent in fact from the history of the Israelites, to whom this knowlege of the *Divine Unity* was revealed by God himself, and who have ever since adhered to it. Even in their temporary deviations into the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, it is allowed that they still retained the sole supremacy of Jehovah. But since their return from the Babylonian captivity, for more than two thousand years, they have never departed from the *Unitarian doctrine*, which Moses their divine lawgiver delivered to them: and from him Mahomet borrowed it. So that it is from this original divine revelation, that the Mahometans in Europe, and all over the east, are *Unitarians*, be-  
lievers



lievers in, and worshipers of the one only true God, and creator of all things.

Nor would there have been so early and lasting a defection from the knowlege and worship of the one true God, the Father, among christians, who, together with their own receive also the hebrew scriptures as of divine authority, if philosophy had not at a very early period obtruded upon them its vain dreams and fanciful speculations concerning the nature of the First Cause of all things and the manner of his operations, and thereby given birth to those twofold and threefold divisions of the Deity, borrowed from the eastern sages and from Plato: which in no small time darkened and nearly extinguished the scriptural doctrine of the unity of God, and brought into the church the direct polytheism of three Persons, three distinct and equal Gods; and from the same impure heathen source were derived that multitude of inferior deities, called saints, dead men and women, male and female, whose worship is kept up in many christian countries, even to this day.

It is by availing himself of the weakness and prejudices of these first christians and followers of Plato, that Mr. Gibbon endeavours to demolish the whole fabric of the gospel at once, in the second volume of his "History of the decline and fall of the Roman empire." After having touched with no ordinary hand the character of this father of the  
Academy

Academy and the stile of his philosophy concerning the Deity, and shewn how he lost himself by diving too deep into the unfathomable mysteries of the divine essence ; he thus proceeds :

“ The theology of Plato (vol. ii. p. 240.) might have been for ever confounded with the philosophical visions of the Academy, the Porch, and the Lycæum, if the name and divine attributes of the *Logos* had not been confirmed by the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the evangelists. The christian revelation, which was consummated under the reign of Nerva, disclosed to the world the amazing secret, that the *Logos*, who was with God from the beginning, and was God, who had made all things, and for whom all things had been made, was incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth ; who had been born of a virgin, and suffered death on the cross.”

Lest it should not be sufficiently attended to, that Plato, as our author soon after expresses himself, p. 242. “ had marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising discoveries of the christian revelation,” he is diligent to mark it also in the margin of his work, that it may take the eye of the most cursory reader. For, from p. 237 to 240, you trace as follows ; “ The system of Plato before Christ 360. “ The *Logos* taught in the school of Alexandria before Christ 300.” (copied by a Jew into one of their apocryphal books called the Wisdom

dom of Solomon) "Before Christ 100. "Revealed  
 "by the apostle John, A. D. 97." So that according to this notation and computation of Mr. Gibbon, the principal secret of the gospel was known to and published by the Athenian philosopher exactly 457 years before it was revealed by St. John, and therefore any extraordinary interposition from heaven in favour of it might well have been spared.

But we shall easily get clear of these consequences in which Mr. Gibbon would involve us, if it can be made to appear, that St. John is very far from teaching any thing like Plato's doctrine in the beginning of his gospel; that he therein makes no new discoveries, nor advances any thing different from what is found in the other evangelists and apostles who wrote before him; and moreover that the date of his gospel is probably much mistaken by our historian.

It must be owned that some of the early Fathers, *St. John bor-* as they are called, who were Plato-  
*rows nothing* nists, and other christian writers since,  
*from Plato.* who have copied after them, have given into the notion, in which Mr. Gibbon triumphs so much, that the *Word, Logos*, in the beginning of the gospel of St. John, is Plato's *Logos*, a second god of his invention. But the disciple of Moses and favourite of Jesus could never promulgate any such polytheistical doctrine; and if he wrote

wrote upon the subject must directly confute it, as he really has done in this very place.

For in truth, the apostle John makes no new revelation here of any thing discovered particularly to himself, tells nothing but what had always been professed and taught by the other apostles, nothing but what the meanest christian, who knew any thing of his religion, was from the first acquainted with. In short, the whole secret of this prefatory part of his work is, to declare in general the divine origin of the gospel; that by the mighty *Word*, or *Wisdom* of God (which is the same as God himself) all things whatsoever were made: that from this *Word* or *Wisdom* of God came all the *light* or knowledge of the way to the divine favour and future happiness, that had been at various times communicated to mankind; but above all that which was revealed by Jesus Christ: in whom this *Word* or *Wisdom* of God dwelt, that is, displayed itself in the most eminent manner, for the benefit and instruction of mankind. I trust, that in some few of the following pages, this is proved to be the design of the apostle so directly and evidently from the sacred writings, which are their own best interpreters, that I should hope we may lay aside Plato's doctrine for the future, and clear our apostle from the aspersions of being a plagiarist, and stealing the chief mystery of his gospel from that philosopher.

Our



Our historian follows many ancient and modern Divines, when he asserts that St. John *Of the true date of St. John's gospel.* wrote his gospel so late as the reign of Nerva, A. D. 97. But this has been a point by no means universally acceded to by christian critics. To name no other, Dr. Lardner, with that discernment, caution, and integrity that distinguish the true critic, and with all the learning and information necessary on the subject, has evinced the high probability of St. John having pen'd his gospel a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, about *thirty years* before the date which Mr. Gibbon ascribes to it. And few, I should suppose, will be of a contrary sentiment, who will take the trouble to examine his arguments.

Christian writers who maintain that St. John, in the preface to his gospel, teaches a different doctrine from the other evangelists and apostles, and that a doctrine of the first importance, do not attend to the difficulties in which they entangle themselves, and which Mr. Gibbon is not studious to diminish. For it would then follow that the chief doctrine of the gospel was not revealed till all its divinely authorised preachers save one was dead : for we have no ground to think any of them but St. John were alive A. D. 97 ; which would make the other apostles to have preached all their lives without knowing, or at least without revealing the most important part  
of

of the gospel. But the contrary has been just now shewn, that St. John differs not in any point of revealed doctrine from the other writers of the New Testament.

It is not difficult for an attentive peruser of Mr. Gibbon's work to perceive, that the main design he has in view is to sink the credit of the Divine Revelation, which we believe to be comprized in the books of the Old and New Testament. And surely if he thinks its miraculous histories to be fabulous, as he seems to do, no one can blame him : he is rather to be commended for trying to expose them to that neglect and contempt which in that case they would well deserve. Real christianity can never suffer from such inquiries ; as it loves and invites fair discussion. But it seems to be not quite so ingenuous and candid, as it may deceive and put unwary readers off their guard, that our historian should personate the real christian at the very time that he is undermining the system. For, in the first volume of his History, p. 450. when he begins more particularly to treat of what relates to christians, he makes this opening ; “ Our curiosity is “ naturally prompted to inquire by what means the “ christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory “ over the established religions of the earth. To “ this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer “ may be returned ; *that it was owing to the con-*  
C *vincing*

“ *vincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the*  
 “ *ruling providence of its great Author.*” It is not  
 easy to imagine that the writer of this paragraph  
 should be any other than a sincere believer of the  
 gospel. And yet in the very next sentence, he  
 begins a long disquisition, the most laboured part  
 of his work, in which he strives to prove that the  
 christian religion might grow up and become esta-  
 blished in the world, in the degree and to the ex-  
 tent it has been, by natural means, without any  
 extraordinary interposition in its favour: from  
 which it would follow, that the gospel is the mere  
 creature and effect of human policy and contrivance.  
 In this attempt Mr. Gibbon exerts his whole  
 strength, which is not small or contemptible; calls  
 in the aid of all the ancient and modern enemies to  
 the christian name; but most avails himself of the  
 ignorance, follies, and indiscretions of its injudi-  
 cious friends, labouring at the same to destroy the  
 foundation of the jewish as well as the christian  
 revelation: for he well discerns that they must both  
 stand or fall together.

In his second volume, where he resumes his ac-  
 count of christianity, in descanting on the first  
 christian emperor's inducements to embrace it, he  
 thus expresses himself, p. 186. “ The partial and  
 “ increasing favour of Constantine may naturally  
 “ be referred to the esteem he entertained for the  
 “ moral character of the christians; and to a per-  
 “ suasion

“ suasion that the propagation of the gospel would  
“ increase the practice of private and public vir-  
“ tue.” And a little lower—“ A prudent magi-  
“ strate might observe with pleasure the progress  
“ of a religion which diffused among the people a  
“ pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics,  
“ adapted to every duty, and every condition of  
“ life, recommended as the will and reason of the  
“ Supreme Deity, and enforced by the sanction of  
“ eternal rewards and punishments.” An ordinary  
unsuspecting reader would conclude from this high  
panegyric, that Mr. Gibbon held the christian re-  
ligion to be the greatest blessing to mankind.  
Nevertheless it is instantly followed by a studied  
picture and representation of it which is quite the  
reverse, and which continues to be exhibited  
throughout his whole work, when any thing re-  
specting christians and their religion comes before  
him. The principles and practice of those very  
corrupt times of Constantine, when instead of the  
world coming over to the church, the church was  
brought over and converted to the world; are  
gravely related as the genuine effects of the gospel.  
One would imagine from our author’s description,  
that *Pandora’s* box was opened again, and all kinds  
of evils and mischiefs and irreconcilable enmities  
had issued out of it, and infected the earth, when  
christianity came into it. But abatements will be  
made by the intelligent reader where there is so



visible a bias one way, and the judgment perverted as an author's necessarily must be by looking only on the dark side of things. And besides, history has to do only with the most striking events, and the most forward active characters, which are not always the best; and our historian would not be likely to go out of his road to describe the silent unnoticed effects of the gospel, in the private walks of life, in promoting virtue and happiness, which have always distinguished it with advantage from heathenism in all times, and at its worst periods.

Wit and irony on serious subjects may please thoughtless uninquiring minds; but the truth of Divine revelation rests on too solid a foundation to be shaken by such efforts. So strong is the direct and positive evidence for the gospel, that it can be overlooked and resisted only by a total indolence, invincible prejudice, or an universal scepticism: diseases these alas! too common in our days, but for which the most palpable demonstration is no cure. Mr. Gibbon exhibits a singular phenomenon in his own person as a writer; viz. a grave professed historian, whose character should be that of the most perfect impartiality, wearing a mask, and dissembling his real sentiments, that he may have the better opportunity to put on his own colouring, whenever he has occasion to treat of christians and their religion. This is a circumstance which in any other case would create a suspicion of disingenuous

genuous dealing and the undue prejudices of a party. We may venture however to pronounce, that christianity will owe great obligations to our ingenious author, though it was much beside his intention to serve it. For from the attention to the subject which has been excited by his writings, and the replies already given to some of the difficulties started by him, it is easy to see that the divine truth of the gospel will be promoted by the objections he has made to it, as it has been by all that have been made, from Celsus's (*a*) time down to our own. And I am persuaded all of them will be found equally void of reason as his insinuation which gave occasion to these remarks; viz. that the chief doctrine of St. John's gospel and of the christian revelation is nothing more than a borrowed fragment of Plato's philosophy.

(*a*) This able and acute adversary of christianity flourished not more than 70 years after the death of St. John. Whoever will take the trouble to see the proofs that he has furnished in its defence whilst opposing it, as they are admirably deduced and drawn out by Dr. Lardner, ("Heathen and Jewish Testimonies, &c." vol. ii. ch. 18.) will at the same time see the fallacy and untruth of many things advanced against it by Mr. Gibbon.

END OF THE PREFACE.



T H E  
C A T E C H I S T :

OR, AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE OF  
THE SCRIPTURES, CONCERNING THE ONLY  
TRUE GOD.

---

I N Q U I R Y I.

*Concerning Jesus Christ, and his authority as a Divine  
Teacher.*

I Have often been desirous of meeting you at some such convenient season of leisure as the present, said Eusebes to Artemon, that I might have the benefit of your friendly assistance in coming to a full and final determination of mind concerning the God whom we christians profess to worship. For I have been long dissatisfied with many things taught me in my youth upon the subject, which are made a part of belief necessary to salvation in the christian society of which I am a member, and much of the public worship of the congregation grounded upon them. I find no sufficient foundation



tion in the scriptures for such opinions and practice, yet am unable to confute some of those arguments which are brought for their support. And though I have taken some pains in studying those sacred records, as becometh every one, I know you to have been more conversant in them, and with greater advantages and abilities: I therefore desire you will give me leave to propose my questions and difficulties to you, and to bear with me, though I should sometimes appear too minute and tedious.

I cannot but approve your design, replied Artemon to Eusebes; and shall be happy to give you any assistance in my power to forward it. For it must be a most anxious state to a good mind to fluctuate in uncertainty about such an important point in morals and religion. And next to the care of doing nothing contrary to conscience, or the inward sense and judgment of our own minds, according to the knowlege we already have; you cannot be employed on a subject more necessary or useful, than in searching the scriptures to know the first great cause and author of all things, on whom we absolutely depend for ever. Right or wrong opinions of the Deity unavoidably influence and form our temper and conduct, and consequently our happiness. And it is the duty of all to review the principles and opinions instilled into them in their tender age, by the authority of those to whose care they were intrusted by divine providence, that  
they

they may not remain always children : and every religious opinion and practice is to be brought to the test (a) of God's word, and to be retained or rejected as found to accord or disagree with it.

*Eusebes.* With your leave then, said Eusebes, I shall enter upon my task. And because Jesus Christ is held forth as God, even the most high God, in the church I belong to ; and so far as I am acquainted, in all the public national churches of the world : that I may attain full satisfaction, who he was, and what was his true character, and that our inquiry may proceed in some order, I shall desire you to inform me, first of all ; how we may be assured that there was such a person as (b) Jesus Christ, who was born 1780 years ago, at Bethlehem in Judea ; but

(a) " The authority of Emperors, Kings, and Princes, is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishops, and Presbyters, is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine and comprehending the sum of religion, reckoning Moses and the Apostles among the Prophets ; and *if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than what they have delivered, let him be anathema :*" i. e. publicly disowned by the christian society. Gal. i. 8.

Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel. p. 14.

(b) *Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Ephes. ii. 8.

but was bred up and had his chief abode at Nazareth in Galilee?

*Artemon.* It is in the same way that we know that there were such men as Cicero, and Julius Cæsar, who lived a little before that period; namely, from the history and accounts given by persons of veracity, who lived and conversed with Jesus, and wrote from their own knowledge concerning him; whose writings have been preserved and faithfully handed down from that time to the present.

*Eusebes.* Do any heathen writers, I pray, make mention of Christ, and of the time in which he lived?

*An. mon.* To mention no others, Tacitus, a roman historian of rank, and in deserved esteem, who lived near the time, after speaking of the wanton burning of Rome by the emperor Nero, and his endeavours to screen himself from the infamy of it, by unjustly accusing the christians, and condemning great numbers of them to the most cruel sufferings for it; takes the opportunity, in that part of his history, to inform his readers, that “these christians (*a*) had their name from Christ, who was put to death as a malefactor, in the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea.” This  
historian

(*a*) Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, supplicio affectus erat. Annal. l. xv. c. 44.

historian speaks in general terms of the crimes of the christians, and particularly of their hostile enmity to all mankind. But this language, in the mouth of a heathen idolater, such as he was, meant nothing more than the christians contempt of their false Gods, and neglect of their worship.

*Eusebes.* I beg to know, what evidence we have, that this same Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher with authority from God?

*Artemon.* This was evinced, 1st. by the miracles which he wrought, and which he alleged as a proof of his being sent in that character from God: *Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him; how long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. John x. 24, 25. Nicodemus said unto Jesus; Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him. iii. 2.*

And 2dly. by the prophecies fulfilled in his person: *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? v. 46, 47.*

*Eusebes.* But where lies our obligation, to obey this divine teacher?

*Artemon.* Jesus continually declared that he came and acted by the authority of God, and that all mankind



mankind were to attend to and obey him. His discourses with the Jews, recorded by the evangelists, St. John, particularly abound with his sayings of this kind. Also at the baptism of Jesus, and upon another solemn occasion afterwards, Almighty God by a voice from heaven proclaimed; "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*" Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5. And the apostle Peter brings this divine command to hear Jesus home to us, who are of the gentiles, in his second epistle, written to gentile christians, where he says; *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God, the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the mount,* 2 Peter. i. 16, 17, 18.

## INQUIRY II.

*Whether Jesus Christ taught the same God as Moses.*

*Eusebes.* I SHOULD be glad to know if Christ instructed the people of the Jews, to whom he was immediately sent, in the knowlege of the one true God?

*Artemon.* No: he never set himself expressly to do this: but as they had been taught it by Moses their

their divine lawgiver before him, he contented himself with referring them to him. (a)

*Eusebes.* In what manner then I pray, did Moses teach this important doctrine?

*Artemon.* The first commandment which God gave to the Israelites by him, is in these terms: (Exod. xx. 2, 3.) *I am the LORD thy God—thou shalt have no other Gods before ME*, or, in my presence. Whoever allows himself one moment's impartial reflection, will see, that every other person, but that one person who here speaks, is excluded from being God, and forbidden absolutely to be acknowledged as such: for the pronoun *me*, restricts the sense distinctly and intirely to one single person, as much as when you say; give that to none but *me*, you mean, that it is to be given to yourself, and to no other person. And it is much to be remarked, that our Saviour furnishes a very signal attestation to and confirmation of this doctrine, that there is but one person who is God, and none other besides him;

(a) When our Saviour's apostles preached the gospel to the heathens, worshipers of many false Deities, they always began with teaching them the *Divine Unity* Acts xvii. 2, 24, 31, xiv. 15. With the Jews, the method of our Saviour and his apostles was, to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah; i. e. their great expected prophet, and promised messenger of Jehovah, the most high God, the God of their fathers.

him ; by the manner in which he cites Moses for it, and refers to him.

*Eusebes.* Be pleased to tell me how that was; and what it might be that called Christ out to speak at all upon the subject ?

*Artemon.* We are told that *One of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him; Which is the first commandment of all?* Observe the solemnity of our Saviour's reply to this man, which is in the very words of Moses, Deut. vi. 4, 5. *And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; (a) the LORD is our God, the LORD alone: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* The answer of the scribe, (with which our Saviour expresses himself greatly satisfied) lays down the doctrine of the  
*Divine*

(a) Le Clerc on Deut. vi, 4. takes notice of the mistake in our english bible, in translating; *The LORD our God is one LORD*, instead of *The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*; and observes that the hebrew construction requires it to be so translated; and moreover, that Jehovah (which we, after the greek, translate LORD) being a proper name, it is hardly sense to say, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, any more than it would be to say, George our king is one George, or for a Philistine to have said, Dagon our God is one Dagon.

*Divine Unity* in the strongest and most definite language, and shews how strictly it was taken by Christ himself, and the Jews in general at that time, ver. 32. *And the scribe said unto him, of a truth, master, thou hast said well: for there is ONE GOD; and there is none other but HE. (b)*

*Eusebes.* As I perceive that our Saviour delivers this doctrine of Moses concerning God, as his own belief, I should be glad to have your thoughts upon this circumstance, with respect to the subject of our inquiry.

*Artemon.* It immediately and directly follows from it; that in the opinion of Jesus, as of Moses, God is one single person, in the strictest possible sense of the word. And indeed, who can love with the *whole* heart; (as here enjoined) who can give their *highest* love to more persons than one?

### INQUIRY III.

*Whether the God of the Israelites formerly, and of their descendants the Jews now, be the same with the God of the Christians?*

*Eusebes.* I BEG to know if our Saviour, upon any occasion, condemned the Jews in his time for being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in worship-

D 2

ing

(b) Dr. Clarke observes, that in this text, Mark xii. 32, most of the ancient MSS. omit the word *God*; and then it stands thus, *Of a truth master, thou*



ping any other than Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one living and true God ?

*Artemon.* We never read of his blaming them in the least in this respect. What he condemned them for, was their disobedience to the laws of God, and not receiving himself as his messenger, their great promised prophet, the Messiah, the Christ; but wilfully shutting their eyes against the powerful convincing evidence which he gave them of his divine mission.

*Eusebes.* Do we find our Saviour at any time making mention of himself having the same God with the rest of the Jewish nation ?

*Artemon.* There is a striking instance of this in his conversation with the woman of Samaria. Upon her asking him which was the right worship, the Samaritan or the Jewish ? He replies, (John iv. 22. *Ye (Samaritans) worship what ye do not know : We (Jews) worship what we do know : for salvation is of the Jews.* In which declaration it is plain that he owns himself to be one of the Jewish people, and a worshiper of the most high God, the Father, in common with them.

*Eusebes.* Can you assign any acknowledgement of this kind made by Christ, that is more explicit and particular ?

*Artemon.*

*thou hast well said, (or,) that He (the LORD, Jehovah, mentioned, ver. 29.) is One, and that there is none other but He,*

*Artemon.* Yes: there is something exceedingly remarkable in the message which he sent to his drooping apostles, by Mary Magdalene, soon after he was raised from the dead. For he therein bids her acquaint them, for their encouragement, that they had the same God and Father with themselves, to whom he was soon to depart; and who would continue his blessing and protection both to them and to himself: *Jesus saith unto her, go to MY BRETHREN, and say unto them; I ascend unto MY FATHER, and your Father; and to MY GOD, and your God.* John xx. 17.

*Eusebes.* What do you collect from this message of Christ to his apostles, which seems so very extraordinary?

*Artemon.* These three important consequences result from it:

1. That the God of the Jews is, by the confession of Jesus, the God of the christians: for this was their common God, and Father, acknowledged by himself and his apostles:

2. That Jesus cannot be the most high God, nor in any sense to be acknowledged as such, since he confesses himself to have the same God and Father with the rest of mankind:

3. That it is utterly contradictory, and impossible, that Jesus should be the most high God, that he should be any thing but a creature, however great his powers and excellencies, who owns his

apostles to be his (a) brethren, i. e. his fellow-mortals. *The most high, the eternal God, has no brethren: can have none.*

*Eusebes.* You say that our Saviour Christ, never in his own time, blamed the people of the Jews for falling into the idolatry of other nations; or worshipping any other but the one only true God: Did his apostles ever find fault with their countrymen on this account?

*Artemon.*

(a) It is worthy of note, that our Saviour, when referring to his highest state of dignity and exaltation, does not disdain to call his virtuous and faithful followers among mankind, his kindred and relations: a circumstance this, which one would hope might in time draw men off from *worshipping him as the supreme God*, whom they are at the same time to consider as *their brother*. It is in that beautiful representation of the day of judgment, where speaking of himself beforehand, as who was to preside at that awful tribunal, he says; *And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these MY BRETHREN, ye have done unto me*, Matth. xxv. 46. See also Heb. ii. 12, 16, 17, where ver. 16, is wrongly translated, viz. *he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham*: whereas it ought to be *he layeth not bold of*, i. e. he saveth not angels, but he saveth the seed of Abraham. St. Paul also calls Christ, *the first born, or chief among MANY BRETHREN*. Rom. viii. 29.

*Artemon.* By no means, far from it: they continually bear testimony, that their countrymen were irreproachably right and exact in this important point; and moreover, that *the God of the Jews was the God of the christians also.* To their rulers, who had forbidden them to teach in the name of Jesus, Peter, and the other apostles, answered and said; *We ought to obey God rather than men.* *THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour.* Acts v. 29, 30, 31. See also iii. 13, &c. iv. 24, 27, with many other passages in the book; and in St. Paul's epistles.

*Eusebes.* Have the Jews, since our Saviour's time, apostatized into idolatry, or fallen away from the worship of Jehovah, the only true God, the Father and creator of all things, whom Jesus and his apostles acknowledged and worshiped in common with them?

*Artemon.* I cannot answer your question better than in the words of a very respectable author of our own country, which made such an impression upon me in reading, that I believe I can recollect them very exactly. It is no less a man than the Lord Chancellor *King*, who gave this testimony to the Jews in this behalf, at the beginning of the present century. "The body of that people have been so immoveably fixed and confirmed, says he, in the belief of the *Unity of God*, which is every where



where inculcated in the mosaical law, that now throughout their sixteen hundred years captivity and dispersion, they have never quitted or deserted that principle, that *God is one*: as is evident from their thirteen articles of faith, composed by Maimonides, the second whereof is, the *Unity of the blessed God*. Which is there explained to be in such a peculiar and transcendant manner, as that nothing like it can be found. And in their liturgy, according to the use of the *Sepharadim*, or the *Spaniards*, which is read in these parts of the world in their synagogues, in the very first hymn, which is an admiring declaration of the excellencies of the Divine Nature, the repeated chorus is this: *All creatures, both above and below, testify and witness, all of them as one, that the LORD is one, and his name one (a)*.

*Eusebes*. Since you have proved the people of the Jews to have been intirely free from error in the object of their religious worship, in the days of our Saviour and of his apostles; and so to have continued from those times to our own: I desire to know if Jews and christians are now agreed concerning the object of religious worship?

*Artemon*. I am sorry to be obliged to answer, that they are not agreed: For besides Jehovah the only  
true

(a) *King's Critical History of the Apostles' Creed*,  
P. 55, 56.

True God, the Father, whom the jewish people then worshiped, and still worship, and whom Jesus and his apostles acknowledged, and taught, and worshiped, the greater part of christians in all countries, have adopted two other *persons*, whom they call *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Ghost*; both of whom they severally invoke in prayer, and worship: which is a great offence, and stumbling-block to the Jews, and makes them look upon christians as little better than idolaters: a matter this which most assuredly deserves the serious consideration of all christians.

## INQUIRY IV.

*Whether Jesus Christ taught that he himself was God?*

*Eusebes.* We must not, however, come too rapidly to a conclusion on this weighty and important subject, about which so many learned men are of a contrary opinion, and are persuaded they have much to say for it. Perhaps, notwithstanding the strong proofs against the probability of it, which you have produced, our Saviour might teach that he was God, in some way incomprehensible by us, yet nevertheless true. I desire, therefore, to know if Christ did

did at any time intimate to his followers, that he was God, or stile himself so.

*Artemon.* He was so far from taking upon himself the stile and title of God, that he once rebuked a person for addressing him, though with well-intended respect, as if he were any thing approaching to that all perfect majesty, or had any thing good of himself, save what came from that Being who made him, and all things: *Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.*" Mat. xix. 17.

*Eusebes.* Was not our Saviour, however, accused by the Jews of making himself equal with God?

*Artemon.* Yes, he was accused of something of that kind, on two different occasions: it appears however from the defence which he made both times, that his adversaries did not charge him with taking upon himself to be Jehovah, the living and true God, a thing that never entered into their thoughts, but only with arrogating to himself the power and authority of God. For, in the first instance, where they accused him of making himself equal with God, or, as it ought to be translated, like to God, he vindicates himself by asserting, that he laid claim to no powers but what he had actually received from God: John v. 19. *Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth*

eth the Father do, &c. And in the second instance, John x. 34, &c. he refutes the calumny by saying, that he had assumed to himself nothing more than became him, (a) as the Son of God, i. e. the Messiah; and that his miracles proved, that this high character belonged to him: "*If I do not the works of my Father, (such works as were the effects of a divine power) believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him; i. e. that I act by a power and authority from God.*"

## INQUIRY V.

*What it was that our Saviour taught concerning himself?*

*Eusebes.* BE so good as to inform me, in what terms our Saviour usually speaks of himself?

*Artemon.*

'a) ver. 36. "*Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?*" i. e. "*Say ye of him whom the Father hath consecrated, set apart and distinguished from the rest of men, by a supernatural birth, and by a communication of the spirit without measure, and by a special commission and authority to teach his will, that he blasphemeth, because he hath thus spoken?*" *L'Enfant* in loc.



*Artemon.* I shall present you with some few examples, by which you may form a judgment what were the sentiments which our Saviour had of himself, and doubtless would have us to entertain of him.

1. *The Son can do nothing of himself, (a) but what he seeth the Father do, John v. 19, 20. As the living Father (b) hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so, &c. My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man is desirous to do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. ver. 19, 20. I have not spoken of myself; but my Father who sent me, he gave a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. xii. 49.*

2. *And he that sent me, is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always, those things that please him. John viii. 29. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. xv. 10.*

3. To

(a) He is here speaking of his miraculous works only; that he never wrought any but by an immediate direction and support from God.

(b) This is well paraphrased by Dr. Clarke: "As the Father, who is the original author of life, has communicated life to me, and will restore it to me after I have laid it down, by raising me again from the dead: so, &c."

3. To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give : but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Matt. xx. 23. It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Acts i. 7. But of that day and hour knoweth no one, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father, Mark xiii. 32.—but my Father ONLY. Matt. xxiv. 36.

4. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!—Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight. Matt. xi. 25, 26. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt, xxvi. 39. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, (a) I thank thee that Thou hast heard me : and I knew that thou

(a) Dr. Clarke has not given our Saviour's true meaning in his paraphrase. It is thus better done by a learned and useful writer : " Father, I thank Thee, that thou hast granted my request, and enabled me to perform this mighty work. I know indeed, that thou always grantest my desires, but I have prayed to Thee at present, and now praise Thee for hearing me, that it may confirm the faith of those who are here, and convince them that I act with thy power, and by thy commission."—The gospel-history from the Text of the four Evangelists, with explanatory notes, by Robert Wait, Minister of Galston, 1765.

*thou hearest me always: but because of the people that stand by, I spoke, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me.* John xi. 41, 42.

*Eusebes.* What do you infer from these declarations of the blessed Jesus concerning himself?

*Artemon.* It is most evident, that he cannot be the most high God, who thus declares; 1. That he can do nothing of himself; that he is intirely under the direction and controul of another in all he does or says; from whom he received his very being; 2. that the reason of God's supporting him in so extraordinary a way, and giving him such high marks of his favour, was on account of his sincere obedience and endeavour to please him, and to keep his commandments; 3. *he* who declares himself ignorant of some things, and that others are not in his own disposal, but in that of another; that is, that he is so limited in knowlege and power; 4. *he* who worshiped, gave thanks and prayed to God continually for assistance; *he*, to whom such things belong, cannot be the most high God. But from these and many other similar declarations of Christ, if we will give credit to his own words, we must conclude, that he was a creature of God like ourselves, equally dependant upon him for every thing; and who, for his consummate worth, and perfect virtue and obedience, was raised to that high place and preeminence in the divine favour, which he now worthily enjoys.

INQUIRY

## INQUIRY VI.

*Whether what Christ thus taught concerning his being a creature, intirely dependant upon God, is only true of him in one sense, that is, according to his human nature, as it is called.*

*Eusebes.* I BEG you to resolve me in one thing, if our Saviour Christ had not *two* natures, so that he was God and man at the same time; and all the depreciating things that he speaks of himself as being a creature, belong to his human nature only?

*Artemon.* The supposition of Christ having two natures, a divine and human nature, taketh for granted the very thing in question, which ought to be proved, namely, that he is a being so compounded.

It is a supposal that has no countenance whatever in the sacred writings. Our Saviour most assuredly used no reserve or ambiguity in what he said of himself. When he averred that he received life from the Father and creator of all things; that he could do nothing of himself; he meant what he said most sincerely, and would have us so to understand him. When he prayed to God for help and strength, he stood in need (a) of what he prayed

E 2

for,

(a) *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, oh that Thou wouldst remove this cup from me! nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. Luke xxii. 41, 42.*



for, and wanted that assistance which was given him.

It is a thing in itself utterly impossible, that a being should be God and man ; creator and creature ; self-existent, eternal, independant, and limited, dependant, and having begining of existence, at the same time ; omniscient and omnipotent, and yet ignorant and weak. These things are not compatible : we should be shocked at their absurdity, if they were not instilled into us before we began to make use of our reason, and if many were not afterwards afraid to make use of it about them ; suffering themselves to be dazzled by great names and authorities, and imposed on by high antiquity, which can give no prescription to what is unintelligible and impossible. In short, this doctrine of Christ being possessed of two natures, is the fiction of ingenious men, determined at all events to believe Christ to be a different Being from what he really was, and uniformly declared himself to be ; by which fiction of theirs, they elude the plainest declarations of scriptures concerning him, and will prove him to be the most high God, in spite of his own most express and constant language to the contrary. And as there is no reasoning with such persons, they are to be pitied, and considered as being under a debility of mind in this respect, however sensible and rational in others.

INQUIRY

## INQUIRY VII.

*Of the testimony and sentiment of the three former evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, concerning our Saviour Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I MUST again intreat you, that we may not leave any thing unexamined, and make too hasty a decision upon a point of this magnitude, which involves almost the whole christian world now, and for many ages, past, in the lamentable breach of the first commandment of God, given by Moses, and confirmed by Jesus; in the continued act and practice of idolatry, by acknowledging other persons to be Gods, besides Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one living and true God. But as there are other remaining arguments from the scriptures, by which some would prove Jesus to be the most high God; I would beg you next to take the trouble, in as concise a manner as you can, to acquaint me, what is said of him by those who are certainly best able to give us true information concerning him: I mean the sacred historians of the life of Christ, and his apostles; who conversed with him, and were instructed by him, that they might instruct others: whether they had any secret commission to teach what he judged proper to omit; either that he himself was the most high God, or that there was any other person who was God, but

the Father only. And as the three former evangelists wrote before St. John, and probably without seeing or knowing of each others writings, I should be glad first to know what their testimonies amount to on this head. Tell me then, I pray, what is the general account which they give of our Saviour Christ?

*Artemon.* The evangelists, Matthew and Luke, give us the pedigree of Jesus, from Abraham and David. Luke derives it from Adam. Both mention his extraordinary birth of Mary, and some instances of singular respect shewn him in his infancy. Luke touches briefly upon his *gradual* improvements in wisdom and virtue, though much above the common rate; of which he relates one instance, when he was no more than twelve years old. After which they both are wholly silent about him 'till the time of his manhood, when he entered upon his public ministry. At this period, Mark takes up the account, and begins *his* history. After which, they all three proceed, each in his own way, to note down the principal facts of our Saviour's public life, somewhat differently; so that you plainly perceive they did not write in concert or copy from each other, as they have all several facts and circumstances of the same fact, not marked by the others; and yet the whole of their narrative, in such harmony and accord with each other in what is substantial and important, as much confirms

firm the general truth of their history, by exhibiting them as so many several independent witnesses of the facts they relate. They all three begin with the baptism of Jesus by John; when he received the *holy spirit* from heaven, or gifts of a divine power and wisdom to fit him for his high office, and to enable him to give full proof of his commission and authority from God. They then relate the *temptation of the devil*, as it is called; which they all agree in dating at this time, and immediately before his entrance on his public ministry; so that however it is to be interpreted, it was something preparatory to it. After this, each gives what he thought a sufficient account of this divine Saviour's doctrine and preaching: of his ardent zeal and unwearied labours to bring men to the knowledge of Divine Truth, and to be saved by it from sin and most lasting misery: the great wisdom and courage on the one hand, and gentleness and kindness on the other, with which he conducted himself in his unacceptable work of reforming mankind; closing their histories with his last sufferings and violent unjust death in the cause of God, and of the truth he had taught from him, together with his speedy restoration to life, by the power of God, in three days, according to his own prediction.

*Eusebes.* What now, I pray, appear upon the whole to have been the sentiments of these evangelists concerning their master, the holy Jesus, from these principal



principal circumstances of his life which you have recited from them ?

*Artemon.* They assuredly considered him, however excellent in virtue, and honoured with high divine powers, to be a creature of God, as well as themselves ; and had not the most distant thought of his being God, the most high God. For they give a very particular relation of his birth, as also of his death and burial. But the eternal, self-existent Being cannot be born, or have beginning of existence : God cannot die, or cease to exist. They also describe Jesus as growing, and making improvement in wisdom and virtue. But it is most derogatory to the infinite all-perfect mind, to suppose he can be wiser and better to-day than he was yesterday. They represent him, moreover, as exposed to temptations, so as to be in danger of being drawn aside by them from the paths of holiness and integrity. But it would be impious to imagine any thing of this kind incident to the Divine Being.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Matthew intimate notwithstanding, as if Jesus was in some peculiar unknown way, God, when in describing the manner of his birth, he applies to him those words of Isaiah (vii. 14.) *Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Imanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us?* Matt. i. 23.

*Artemon.*

*Artemon.* In whatever way you consider the evangelist as applying this passage to the birth of Christ, it will amount only to this; that at the birth of the child, or by him, some way or other, *God would be with them*, would do something extraordinary, work some great deliverance for his people, confer some singular blessing on them: not that the infant babe would be the most high God, in any sense or manner whatsoever. The way of expression was familiar with the hebrew writers, and runs through the whole bible. *God is with any one*, when he does any thing extraordinary for him, (a) or by him. So Nicodemus, on seeing Christ's miracles, tells him, that he was persuaded (John iii. 2.) *that God was with him*, that he had an extraordinary power and commission for him. St. Luke also shews us how such phrases ought to be understood, and *how easily and readily the common people among the Jews understood them, though we through prejudice and inattention make such a mystery of them.* For when our Saviour had raised the widow's son to life, it is said; (Luke vii. 16.) *there came a fear on all: and they*

(a) Acts x. 38. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.* Here the sacred writer expressly declares, how God was with Jesus of Nazareth; namely, by those extraordinary powers conferred upon him.

they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet had risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people. God visited his people, say they. How visited them? Not in person, but by raising up a great prophet among them. This explains that language concerning the future times of the Messiah, so frequent in the prophetic writings: viz. *A voice crieth; In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH, make straight in the desert a highway for our God: —Get thee up upon a high mountain, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Sion: Exalt thy voice with strength, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem. Exalt it; be not afraid: Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold the Lord JEHOVAH shall come.* Isaiah xl. 3, 9, 10. God, the Lord Jehovah, did come to his people, when Jesus was raised up, of the family of Abraham and seed of David, and came among them, acting by a divine authority, and doing these mighty miracles of raising the dead to life, &c. in proof of it.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Matthew, near the close of his history, (xxviii. 19.) teach that there are three persons, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, who are each of them God; when he tells us, that Jesus ordered his apostles, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit? Are not these three put on a level, and made equal to each other?

*Artemon.*

*Artemon.* Assuredly, no one could rise up from the reading of St. Matthew's gospel, and imagine that any such doctrine was to be extracted from these words. For in all the foregoing parts of his book, he never speaks of Christ but as their great expected prophet, and the messenger of God, gifted with extraordinary divine powers. Nor does he ever describe the spirit or holy spirit as any thing but a divine power, the power or gift of God. So that unless a man brought along with him a previous persuasion of three persons being each of them God, he could never discover it here, or in any thing else delivered by the evangelist. Moreover, the being baptized into any person, does not bespeak that person to be God, as is well known; for St. Paul makes mention of the Israelites being *baptized into Moses*, 1 Cor. x. 2. Nor does our Saviour's being thus joined together with the Father, imply any the least equality to him, any more than Moses being in like manner joined together with Almighty God, implied that Moses was equal to God; where it is said, (Exod. xiv. 31.) *the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and his servant Moses*: or that king David was the most high God, because it is said, (1 Chron. xxix. 20.) *that the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshiped the LORD and the king*. I would farther observe, that the apostles, who were the best judges of their divine master's intentions, did not think there was  
any



any thing so important in this form of words in baptism; or so extraordinary a mystery therein, as many have made of it. For we never find afterwards that they confined themselves to the use of it; but on the contrary, when they baptized persons, they baptized them into the name of Jesus (a) only; which indeed comprized the other, being an abridgement of it. For the true meaning of being *baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit*, is the being baptized or initiated into the knowlege or profession of that gospel or doctrine of eternal salvation, which the God and Father of all, revealed to mankind by the ministry of his son Christ Jesus, and confirmed by the gifts of an extraordinary divine power, communicated to Jesus and his apostles. One wonders that those who would hence deduce that Jesus is the most high God, equal to the Father, do not consider that in the very same instant, Jesus himself declares, that his power, great as it was, had been received from another; that is, he had it not of his own. ver. 18. *All power is GIVEN unto me.* Add to all this, the utter improbability that this apostle and evangelist should introduce two persons, as being each of them God, equal to the most high God, two new Gods, the Son and Holy Spirit, so intirely

(a) Acts viii. 16. *They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.* See also x. 48. xix. 5. and Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27.

intirely contrary to their jewish belief, and first commandment of God, delivered by Moses, and confirmed by Jesus himself, viz. that there was but one single person, Jehovah, who was God, and Father of all ; and this strange doctrine, so different from what this sacred writer had all along maintained, to be thrust in, at the end of his book, by the by as it were, without any preceding notice, or proof of it. It is plain, and has been shewn, that the evangelist asserts no such doctrine: but it would have been hardly credible, had he asserted it in such a way.

## INQUIRY VIII.

*Of the testimony and sentiment of the apostle John concerning our Saviour Christ.*

*Eusebes.* You have left nothing farther for me to ask you concerning the real sentiments of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, relating to Jesus Christ ; who, I see, were far from looking upon him to be God, the most high God. But as St. John has been held openly and directly to assert this, in the very preface to his gospel ; I must beg you particularly to favour me with your sentiments on that head. And I am the more anxious to hear your full discussion of the matter,

F

because

because christian writers inform us, and the book itself confirms the tradition, that this evangelist wrote after the other three, and after having seen their writings, and with a view to supply some things that had been omitted by them. I beg leave therefore to ask, if it be Jesus, as commonly supposed, whom St. John describes under the title of *The word*, ο λογος, at the entrance of his history? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the begining with God. All things were made by him; and so on.* John i. 1, 2.

*Artemon.* I think, and am persuaded, that we may, without any hesitation, pronounce, that it can, in no sort or degree, be said of Jesus Christ, that he was in the begining, before any thing was made; or, that he was God and creator of all things. Such language can belong to none but the most high God. For there are not two supreme Gods and Creators; nor can be. And that the apostle speaks not here of Jesus, but of God only, is most evident, if we will but attend to his words, and be guided by them. For he adds in the same breath and sentence, θεος ην ο λογος, *God was the Word*; i. e. that *Word*, of which he had been speaking.

*Eusebes.* But, how can God be the *Word*? Is it not a most strange, unintelligible way of speaking?

- *Artemon.*

*Artemon.* However it may seem to us, there was nothing extraordinary or difficult to be understood in it, to the hebrews his countrymen, or to persons acquainted with the stile of the sacred writings; for whose use he composed his history of Christ. In his other works, we find him saying; (1 John 1. 5.) *God is light*; as in him is the most unspotted purity and holiness: and again (iv. 16.) *God is love*; as in him is the most perfect benevolence; and in like sort here, *God is the Word*, i. e. he may be so called, because in him is all wisdom and power: by the term *Word*, understanding the wisdom or the powerful (a) word and command, by which all things were made: and either of these two senses, the term, ο λογος, used by St. John, properly holds forth to us.

*Eusebes.* What then do you imagine, Artemon, to have moved the apostle to place such an extraordinary introduction before his history of Christ? What was his design it?

*Artemon.* There is nothing in it, Eusebes, so very extraordinary; or unsuitable to his usual stile in writing, which abounds much in high figurative expressions: in which he appears to have copied after his master, Jesus. And his design throughout this.

F 2

preface,

(a) Pf. xxxiii. 6. *By the word (τω λογω) of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*



preface, very obviously, and very proper and befitting the work he was entering upon, is, to teach that all things were made by and proceeded from the most perfect Reason or Wisdom, which is God himself, and not from any inferior power or agent, which the eastern and greek philosophers maintained, and which some of them too soon brought into the christian church : and that from this Word or Wisdom of God, came all the lights and assistances, which mankind had at different times received by divine messages, and Prophets, especially by Jesus Christ, who was superior to them all ; and who was *the true light*, by way of excellence, above all others. And in using this language, the apostle most probably had in his eye, and imitated that description of the most high God, in *Proverbs viii.* where Wisdom is introduced as a Divine Person, who had been with God *from everlasting, from the beginning, before the world was made. When he prepared the heavens, I was there. Then was I by him, and I was daily his delight.* All which beautiful imagery is contrived and adopted to teach in a more lively way, that God made all things, and governs them, with the most perfect wisdom.

*Eusebes.* But when our evangelist says of this Word or Wisdom, that it *was with God*, and repeats immediately, as it were to impress us the more strongly with it ; *The same was in the beginning with*

with God: Does it not imply, that this *Word* or Wisdom was a real intelligent being or person, who is thus represented as being with God; and not a divine attribute or quality.

*Artemon.* It no more implies this than the language I have just now mentioned, of Solomon, concerning *Wisdom*; (Prov. viii.) *Then was I by him,* and so on, proves *Wisdom* to have been an intelligent person; another deity. Our apostle, in another place, says; (1 John i. 2) *We shew unto you that eternal life, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, and was manifested unto us.* No one here understands, that *eternal life* was a real person, though spoken of in this lively style, as being or living with the Father. Nor should we do it in the other case, if through our heathen prejudices we were not prone to catch at every expression that would favour the notion of a multiplicity of Gods.

*Eusebes.* Are there any arguments which confirm this interpretation that you have given, and prove that the evangelist was far from intending to assert that Jesus was *the Word*, which is here characterized as the most high God and creator of all things?

*Artemon.* There are many arguments of holy scripture which shew this in the most convincing manner. For

1. Our evangelist could not set out at first, and stile Jesus the most high God, and within a few

pages of his book afterwards, introduce the same Jesus declaring, as he continually does, that he was himself a creature of God, depending upon him, and who received life and every thing from him; and afterwards also asserting, as I have had occasion to mention before, that the Father, as distinguished from himself, and all other beings, was the only true God; and that he himself had the same God, and Father, in common with the rest of the human race: whom he calls his brethren. Such contradictions no writer of a sound understanding can fall into.

2. It cannot be imagined that a pious jew, like our apostle, should, as I before observed to you with respect to St. Matthew, bring in a new God, a new, and before unknown creator of the world, in flat contradiction to the first and second commandments of their divine law; and in the face of those many declarations of Jehovah by his prophet (*a*); that *He* only was God, and no other besides him; *He* only, creator of all things. And this, moreover, to be but once asserted, without any proof, in the beginning of his book: and never to recur to it afterwards; never again to stile Jesus the *Word*, or call him God; but to speak of him, and describe him as speaking of himself, as being nothing of himself, but whatever he was, receiving it from God. Such suppositions are

not

(*a*) See Isaiah xlii. v. xlii. 24. xlii. 11, 12.

not within the line of credibility, where there is any degree of sense or consistency.

3. It is also to be observed, that our evangelist, St. John, joined with the rest of the apostles, in a prayer to almighty God, in which Jesus is particularly and expressly excluded from being God and the creator, and in a very striking manner contradistinguished from that adorable majesty; from him who is alone sovereign and supreme. It is near the beginning of the second treatise of St. Luke, and runs thus; “*Sovereign Master (a); Thou art the God who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;—grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by thy stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy (b) servant Jesus.*” Acts iv. 24, 29, 30. St. John,

(a) *Δεσποτα*, *Sovereign Master* rather than *Lord*: a name in scripture appropriated to God.

(b) It hath been shewn at large in another place, (see “*A Dissertation on praying to Christ.*” p. 89,) that the apostles, in this prayer, call our Saviour, God’s *holy servant*, not *child*, as we translate it. I find also Dr. Clarke intimating that the word should be translated *servant*, and that name given to Christ, not only in this chapter, but also Acts iii. 13, and 25. It deserves notice here, that Almighty God, by the prophet Isaiah, more than once calls the future Messiah,



St. John, and the other apostles, who offered this prayer to God, by addressing him, *Thou*, as one single person, could never think there was any other person who was God ; or consider Jesus, whom in this very prayer they call the *servant* of God, as being at the same time the most high God, *by whom all things were made.* John i. 3.

*Eusebes.* Can you shew it probable by any other argument, that St. John did not in the beginning of his gospel intend to describe Christ as being the *Word*, who was God, and creator of all things ?

*Artemon.* There is one proof, which though not directly taken from the scriptures, does much confirm the evidence, that the evangelist intended no such thing. And this is furnished by the *creed*, called the apostles' ; which, although it was not written by them, is on all hands allowed to be very ancient, especially the former parts it ; and therefore may be well reckoned to contain the sentiments of the apostles, and of St. John included amongst them, concerning the only true God. For it teaches,

Messiah, the Christ, *his servant ; Behold my servant, whom I will uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I will make my spirit rest upon him.* Isaiah xliii. 1. Bishop Lowth's version. See also lii. 13. liii. 11. Can we wonder that Jews are averse to christianity, when they see christians worshiping him as the most high God, whom their prophets call God's servant ?

teaches, that there is but one God, who is the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and that Jesus Christ, his beloved son, who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered the ignominious death of a slave, under Pontius Pilate, the roman governor of Judea; and that there was a *Holy Spirit*, or extraordinary divine power, communicated from God, by which the gospel was preached and established in the world. Whoever composed this creed, most certainly did not believe (a) Jesus Christ

(a) The *apostles creed* is indeed, in the strictest sense, an Unitarian creed; and so early an attestation to the doctrine of the *Divine Unity* being received and acknowledged by christians, is of importance. In a well-known *Catechism*, immediately after the repetition of this creed, this question follows; "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?" To which the child is made to give this answer; "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind, Thirdly, in God the holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God." But can any one truly say, that such a doctrine is contained in this creed; and will not children so taught, believe that there are three Gods, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and go to the reading of the scriptures afterwards with this undue bias on their minds, which may be with difficulty afterwards laid aside; perhaps never?

Christ to be the most high God, and creator of all things : for God cannot suffer or die ; which has been observed before, but hardly can be too often repeated.

*Eusebes.* What does our evangelist mean afterwards, when going on farther to treat of the *Word*, ο *λογος*, which, according to your interpretation, is God himself, he says, “ *The Word was made flesh*; or, as it might more justly be rendered in english, *The Word became man*, a mortal man, and dwelt among us, and so on. Can this be said of God ? Is it possible for him to become a man ?

*Artemon.* Unquestionably that is a thing impossible, and far from the intention of the apostle. Nevertheless his words will be found to have a very just, proper, and easy meaning, if we attend to the design of St. John in them. For here he comes to the point, for the sake of which he had been giving such an animated and magnificent description of the supreme Being ; namely, that he might introduce the Character of Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, who was to be the subject of his book, with the greater solemnity in this 14th verse. “ Now, says he, this *Word*, or *Wisdom* of God, which, in a very just and well known sense, is God himself ; by which he first made all things, animate and inanimate, men and angels ; and from which proceeded all his former extraordinary communications of light and knowlege to mankind ; was at last imparted in the fullest manner to Jesus, and resided in

in him: by which all men might plainly discover, and we his apostles had undeniable evidence, that he was the Messiah, the Christ, whom all were to hearken to and obey, as God himself: *The Word*, says he, (Wisdom) *became man, and dwelt among us* (in the man Christ Jesus); *and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten* (or most beloved) *of the Father.*

*Eusebes.* Can you illustrate this interpretation which you have given of the words of St. John, by any similar language of Christ or the other apostles?

*Artemon.* *Jesus saith unto him; have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the father: and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: and the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.* John xiv. 9. In this passage, the Father, whom Christ speaks of as dwelling in him, corresponds exactly with the *Word*, or *Wisdom* becoming man, and *dwelling* in Christ. And in both places, the expressions denote, in the bold figurative stile of the scriptures, the influence of the Divine Wisdom and Power, by which Jesus acted.

Exactly of the same cast and import is that language of the apostle Paul, Colos. ii. 8, 9. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,*



ceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (rather of the divine power) bodily. To understand this, you are to take along with you, that in the apostolic age, it pleased God to bestow various gifts of extraordinary knowledge, of ability to teach others, of speaking in the language of other nations, &c. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv. promiscuously on believers, for the support of the christian church in its infancy. With a view to this, St. Paul, in another place, prays for the christians at Ephesus, that they *might be filled with all the fulness of God.* (Eph. iii. 19.) i. e. might abound in all those extraordinary gifts from God, which were needful for them. Now here he says, that these gifts of a Divine Wisdom and Power were bestowed on Christ without measure (*a*), for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Divine Power; which is really nothing else but saying, in other words, that the Divine Word, or Wisdom became man, and dwelt in Christ Jesus. With just cause therefore does the apostle exhort to adhere to Christ, and not follow that false philosophy, and worldly accommodating wisdom, with which some were already beginning to corrupt the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, and in which they unhappily

(*a*) *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*  
John iii. 34.

happily succeeded after the apostles were gone off the stage.

*Eusebes.* It has been maintained by many persons, that in this gospel of St. John, Christ is expressly declared to be God, in that narrative which the evangelist gives of his condescension to his incredulous disciple Thomas, by affording him sensible proof of the reality of his being raised to life; when convinced of his being really alive, from the dead, (John xx. 28.) *he answered and said unto him; My Lord, and my God.*" I beg to know how is this to be understood, if Jesus be not God?

*Artemon.* But that the blindness of prejudice, Eusebes, knows no bounds, one might wonder how it could enter into the minds of so many learned and good men in all ages, that this disciple of Christ, who a little before had given up his master Jesus as absolutely dead; and could not be prevailed upon by evidence that was satisfactory to others, to believe but that he was really dead: that this man, with such sentiments, should instantly address Jesus as the most high God, whom till that moment he had supposed without life, merely on receiving sensible proof of his having been under such an error concerning him. Christ's being brought to life again could be a proof of nothing else but of the favour and goodness of God in restoring it to him: not a proof, that he was God, the most high God. And the emotions it might naturally raise in

G

Thomas's

Thomas's breast, would be expressive of his admiration and thanksgiving to the heavenly Father, which made him break out into that exclamation, "*My Lord, and my God.*" This may be considered as an imperfect ejaculation or prayer to God; and had he uttered it at full length, he might have said, "O my Lord, and my God, I thank thee for this thine unexpected benignity, in raising my dead master Jesus to life again." Or, taking the words, as some do, in the nominative case, the sense may be thus supplied, "My Lord and my God hath done this great thing." But if any, still, notwithstanding, will persist in believing that Thomas here calls Christ, God, they should take along with them, that Christ, not long before, had told his disciples in plain words, that he had the same God and Father with themselves: so that he can only be God in such a sense as a creature can be so called. In short, no proof can be drawn from this speech of Thomas's, either that Jesus was the most high God, or that Thomas believed him so to be.

#### D I A L O G U E IX.

*Of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, as it may be collected from St. Luke's second volume, called The Acts.*

*Eusebes.* You have convinced me that the evangelist St. John intirely agrees with the three former evangelists, in never teaching or delivering any thing

thing concerning the holy Jesus, which implied that he was the most high God. But we shall not complete the evidence which one of them, St. Luke, gives on this subject, unless we take in the second volume of his gospel-history, called, *The Acts*. And as his design in writing this, was, to shew how the gospel was first proposed and preached to jews and heathens by the apostles, it must be curious and important to know what they say of their divine Master; how they exhibit him to the world. But as this same historian has recorded several appearances of Christ after his resurrection, I should be obliged to you first to acquaint me if any thing presented itself at such times, whence it might be concluded, that Christ was the most high God?

*Artemon.* There is certainly nothing like this, in the account which St. Luke gives of what passed at our Saviour's taking his final leave of his disciples: but it must have had quite the contrary effect upon every one present, and upon all that now pay any attention to it. For, in what their divine Master says to them at that time, he very naturally informs them, that his power and knowlege were limited; and that the direction and government of the world was not his province, but belonged to the heavenly Father alone. "*When they (his disciples) were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the*



*times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power."* Acts i. 7.

*Eusebes.* Much has been said and written concerning the heavenly vision which Stephen was favoured with a little before his death, and the request which he at that time preferred to Christ: But I beg to know if we can thereby learn what were the sentiments of that holy man, and first martyr for the gospel, concerning our Lord.

*Artemon.* Whatever be determined concerning the address, which he on that occasion offered to Christ, we may be assured that Stephen did not believe him to be above the condition of a creature: for he speaks of him as being the *Son of man*, in that state of exaltation and honour in which he beheld him: "*Lo, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.*" Acts vii. 56.

*Eusebes.* What information did Christ give to Paul concerning his own true character, when he first made himself known to him from heaven, with a view to make him his apostle, and the chief teacher of the heathen world? Does he acquaint him, that he himself was God, and to be acknowledged as such?

*Artemon.* No; very far from it. In that heavenly state of glory, the Lord Jesus owns himself to be the man that once had for so long time his abode in the mean town of Nazareth in Galilee. For  
thus

thus does our apostle himself relate what then passed: "*I fell upon the ground, and heard a voice, saying unto me; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH, whom thou persecutest.*" Acts xii. 7, 8.

*Eusebes.* In what manner did the apostles of Christ speak of him, in their first preaching of the gospel to the world, after his resurrection?

*Artemon.* The words of the apostle Peter, in his first sermon to his countrymen, are very remarkable, and deserve the attention of all christians. They are these; Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man, (a) authorized among you by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him ye have taken, being delivered up (to you) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.*

*Eusebes.* What appear hence to be the apostle Peter's sentiments concerning his divine master, and which he was desirous the audience should carry away with them from his discourse?

*Artemon.* Jesus of Nazareth, being here evidently contradistinguished from the God and governor of the world, as one of the human race most

G 3 highly

(a) ἀποδείκνυσθαι) not approved, but authorized, demonstrated to be the Christ, by miracles, &c.

highly favoured of God; this must have been Peter's persuasion concerning him, and what he was studious to inculcate upon his hearers. For he evidently speaks of him, as a human being, *and as a man*, who died as all others do, though by a violent and unjust death; but God, he says, (ver. 24 to 33) vindicated his innocence, and divine mission, by restoring him soon to life, according to the predictions that had been given before concerning him. And he farther informs them, that the great miracles they had seen wrought by Jesus among them, were not done by any powers of his own, but by a power from God, who thus gave testimony to him. After which he concludes, with observing to them, that the dignified titles of *the Christ*, and *the Lord*, i. e. of the great prophet, teacher, and lawgiver of his church and people, of all that did or should believe in him; that these honours were bestowed upon him by Almighty God: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know, assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.* Acts ii. 36.

The very same conclusions concerning our Saviour, who, and what he was, are to be drawn from the manner in which Peter afterwards, by divine appointment, taught the knowledge of Christ and of his gospel to Cornelius, a roman military officer, stationed in Judea, a person of eminent piety and virtue. The account of it is contained in *Acts* x. ver. 34 to 44; and you will do well to consult

consult it. For it is no less remarkable than the extract which I just now gave you from that apostle's first sermon: and both of them, without all doubt, hold forth that specific character of the blessed Jesus, by which the apostle was desirous to have him known and distinguished all over the world.

Not unlike also is St. Paul's first sermon at Antioch, Acts xiii. 16, 40. to a mixed audience of jews and pious heathens: only there is one particular circumstance therein to be remarked, viz. that he begins with informing the heathens among them, (ver. 17.) that it was the *God of the people of Israel*, (the only true God and creator of all things) *who had raised up unto Israel, of the family of David their former king, that Saviour Jesus*, in whose name he spake to them.

*Eusebes.* You have given several instances what it was that the jews and pious heathens, who *already* believed in God, were taught concerning Jesus Christ, by those who first preached the gospel by authority from God to them; I should be glad to be informed in what manner they address themselves to teach and convert the idolatrous heathens?

*Artemon.* We have a remarkable example of this in St. Paul's celebrated speech at Athens, when summoned to declare his doctrine before the judges of the court of Areopagus.

*Eusebes.* What is the method there taken by the apostle to bring them to the knowlege of the gospel?

*Artemon.*



*Artemon.* Paul informs them that there was but one God, the maker, governor, and preserver of all things, ever present to his creatures, who was to be worshiped in purity of heart, who inspected the actions of men, and would call them to strict account for them hereafter, by that person whom he had appointed to teach them his will, of which he had given the fullest assurance to all that would attend to it. “*God, that made the world and all things therein: he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, &c. The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts xviii. 24. &c.*”

*Eusebes.* Why is it, do you imagine, that the apostle mentions only this single circumstance to these men concerning our Saviour, that he was appointed of God to be the future judge of men?

*Artemon.* It is probable that St. Luke selected this for brevity sake, because it was that which St. Paul principally dwelt upon, being what was most likely to awaken and alarm the minds of these dark and profligate idolaters, as were the greatest part of those to whom he spoke; although it is to be presumed that he gave them other information more at large concerning Christ and his doctrine.

*Eusebes.*

*Eusebes.* According to this account, which St. Luke gives of it, what impression was the apostle's discourse calculated to leave upon the minds of the Athenians, concerning Jesus Christ? Would they take St. Paul to be a setter forth of strange gods, in their own way, as some of them, according to their idolatrous notions and prejudices, supposed him to be, before he began to speak; and that Jesus was some new God, added to those they already had, and one whom they had never heard of before?

*Artemon.* By no means. Those amongst them who paid any serious attention to what was uttered by the apostle, would depart persuaded, that in Paul's account there was but one God, the creator of the world; and that Jesus was a man, *an*, who was God's messenger, and by him designed and qualified for a high and most important office in the future world, and that therefore it was of great concernment for them to be acquainted with the message and doctrine which he delivered from God.

*Eusebes.* But does not St. Paul, when taking leave of the elders of the church of Ephesus, call Christ, God; where he says, Acts xx. 28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the holy spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood?*

*Artemon.* The best and most antient manuscript copies of the New Testament, have not here, the church

church of GOD, but the church of THE LORD, i. e. of Jesus; and so the most ancient fathers cite it, and so without all doubt it ought to be read. It is one of those astonishing and at the same time most humbling considerations, that persons of large and improved understanding in other respects, should ever entertain the degrading thought, that the most high God and creator of all things, could, in any sort or degree, or by any connection or union whatever, shed blood and die.

## INQUIRY X.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle Paul, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I HAVE reaped so much benefit, Artemon, from your attention to my inquiries and doubts on these interesting subjects, that I must beg you to indulge me with it a little longer. St. Paul, in the general turn of his writings, always speaks of God as one single person, in such a way as no one can mistake him; and in some places he particularly asserts the *Divine Unity* in the strongest terms, and seems an utter stranger to what is called the *Trinity*, or three persons all together making up one God. For he says, 1. Cor. v. *To us, (christians) there is but One God, the Father.* And Eph. iv. 6. *There is but One God, and Father of all, who is above all, &c.* If therefore there be any  
meaning

meaning in words, I must conclude that the apostle believed that there was no other person who was God, but the Father. And yet there are several passages in his epistles, in which he appears to speak of Jesus Christ as being the most high God, and creator of all things. For example, in his epistle to the Romans, (ix. 5.) he says of Christ, that he *is over all, God, blessed for ever*. If Christ be the God over all, blessed for ever, are there not then *two* Gods, contrary to our apostle's repeated assertion, that there is but *one* God, the Father? Surely he could not so flatly contradict himself, and say, that Christ was another God, when he had maintained that there was but one God, the Father? I should be glad to know where the mistake lies in this matter; for some mistake I am sure there must be.

*Artemon.* If men had not been prepossessed with the notion of Christ being the most high God, they could never have applied these words of the apostle to him. If you turn to the place, Rom. ix. 5. you will see that he is enumerating and extolling the religious advantages, and privileges of the jewish people, and closes the whole with saying, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*; i. e. that even Christ himself by his descent, was a man of the jewish nation. Now can any one imagine, that St. Paul, after having said this, should go to add, that this same person of their kindred and nation, an Israelite born,



born, was the most high God, blessed for ever: a thing that must have shocked them, and turned them against every thing else that he could offer, as they were unmoveable and rooted in this, that there was no other God besides Jehovah, the God of their Fathers? No: an unprejudiced reader would see that after the words, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, should be put a full stop. And then to follow, in a sentence by itself, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever*. This, as the learned know, is a proper construction of the apostle's words, and it is very agreeable to his manner of writing, to throw in such a devout ejaculation, and then proceed with his subject (a).

*Eusebes*. But does not St. Paul assert, that there is another God, equal to the Father, when he says, (Philip. ii. 6.) that *Christ Jesus thought it no robbery to be equal with God*?

*Artemon*. English readers are much imposed (b) upon by such a translation of the apostle's words. The learned

(a) Some may approve the very probable reading of the apostle's words, offered to the world by Dr. Whitby, and others after him, viz. *whose or (of whom) are the Fathers; and from whom is Christ according to the flesh; whose or (of whom) is the God over all, blessed for ever*. Whitby's Last Thoughts, p. 80.

(b) The following hymn, which goes upon the idea of there being two equal Gods, and one of them a man,

learned know that they mean no such thing : that instead of, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God* ; it should be translated, he did not eagerly covet to be like to God, to appear in the likeness of God ; i. e. was not ambitious, or fond of exerting those divine powers which had been bestowed upon him : on account of which he is just before said to have been *in the form* (i. e. likeness) *of God* ; i. e. to have such an outward resemblance of him as those divine powers gave him. So that our apostle does indeed assert that our Saviour was possessed of high divine powers in which he resembled the most high God : but at the same time, he goes on to say, that Christ was so far from being himself

a man, shews one of the unhappy consequences of authorizing such a wrong translation and perversion of the apostle's words.

- “ Yet there is One of human frame,  
 “ Jesus, array'd in flesh and blood,  
 “ *Thinks it no robbery to claim*  
 “ *A full equality with God.*  
 “ Their glory shines with equal beams ;  
 “ Their essence is for ever one,  
 “ Tho' they are known by different names,  
 “ The Father-God, and God the Son.  
 “ Then let the name of Christ our King,  
 “ With equal honours be ador'd.”

Watts. Hymn li, book 2.

himself God, or (b) equal to him ; that he was even dependent upon God for these divine powers, as well as for every thing else that he possessed, which

(b) It is a paraphrase by no means warranted by the apostle's language, which bishop Hurd, in his sermons, lately published, vol. ii. p. 164, has given of those words of our english translation, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God* ; i. e. “ Jesus, Christ, “ (says his lordship) was in no haste to seize upon, “ and assert his right of equality with God.” For it is a circumstance well known to the learned, that the word *ισος*, which his lordship would have to convey the idea of equality here, does frequently signify a resemblance, a likeness only ; and the propriety of giving that sense to it in this place, is confirmed by this, that it is a word that admits of degrees of comparison, *ισολεγος*, *ισολατος*, which cannot be asserted of things equal, that they are more or less equal. See *Whitby* in loc. and *Emlyn*, vol. i. p. 92. note. St. Paul therefore gives no countenance whatever to such an interpretation of his words. Moreover, his lordship surely did not sufficiently attend to the consequences of maintaining that Christ *claimed a right of equality with God*. For “ the asserting him to be equal to God (to use the words of an able commentator) must of necessity carry in it an assertion of a plurality of Gods. If there be a God, and another who is equal to him in nature, perfections, and dominion, the latter must be as truly a God, in the highest and most absolute sense

as

which were God's gracious gift to him. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and GRACIOUSLY BESTOWED upon him [*ἑταριστος*] a name which is above every name; that, in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father. Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11.

Eusebes. But how shall I get over that other passage of St. Paul, without allowing that he looked upon Christ as God; where he maintains that all things were created by him; (Colos. i. 16.) For by him, (says he) were all things created that are in

H 2

heaven,

as the former; and when men have said all they can, a God and a God are as certainly two Gods, as a man and a man are two men. Nor can this be evaded, by pretending that they are not two Gods, because they are one and the same Being, and so one and the same God; for the inspired writers are utter strangers to such assertions, that a Being is equal to itself." I would farther add; should not those persons who thus give to Almighty God an equal, and one who, in this very passage, is said to have suffered death, in obedience to God; should not they consider those awful demands made of old to the idolatrous Israelites? "To whom then will ye liken me? or shall I be equal, saith the holy One? To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?" Isaiah xl. 25. xli. 5.



heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him.

*Artemon.* You may be assured, that whatever meaning is to be put upon these words, St. Paul had no design in them of asserting that Christ was God; because in the verse immediately before he styles him, *the image of the invisible God*: i. e. he declares him not to be the invisible God, but a resemblance of him, one of the most dignified of his creatures, who had the honour to be made most like unto him. For whatever is not God, must be a creature. There is nothing between.

Moreover it is utterly impossible that our apostle should here ascribe the creation of the world to Christ, for the two following reasons; first; because no pious jew could believe there were two creators; but that it was one single person, Jehovah, who was the sole creator of all things. For this is an idea that runs through the whole bible, whilst the doctrine is thus most expressly laid down on particular occasions: “O Lord God of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims! Thou art God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. *Is. xxxvii. 16.* Thus saith the LORD, the holy one of Israel, and his Maker; I have made the earth and  
created

created man upon it : I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens." Is. xlv. 11, 12, &c.

Secondly ; St. Paul, in his sermon at Athens, tells them (Acts xvii.) that " God, who made the world, and all things therein : HE, that single person, and no other, had appointed the man, Christ Jesus, to be the judge of mankind under himself, at some future day." It is impossible that any thing should be more distinguished and different from God, the maker of the world, than Christ is here marked to be.

*Eusebes.* You have satisfied me, that St. Paul never believed, and therefore could never intend to say, (a) that Christ was the creator of the world. But as he here says, that *by him all things were*

H 3

*created,*

(a) It may be thought that there is a text omitted by Eusebes, that overturns all this reasoning, and shews, that, our apostle, whatever self-contradiction there might be in it, actually asserted Jesus Christ to be the creator of all things. It is in *Ephesians* iii. 9. where he treats of *the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ.* But it is to be observed, that the words *by Jesus Christ*, are wanting in the best manuscripts, and ancient versions of the N. T. neither are they found in Tertullian, Jerom, Ambrose, &c. and are rejected by Mill, Bengelius, and Westein ; and therefore should not be put in our Bibles, as part of St. Paul's writings.

*created, &c.* I desire to know what it is that I am to understand by the words he here uses?

*Artemon.* You are to observe, that St. Paul is writing to a church or congregation of christians, consisting of jews in part, but principally of heathen idolaters, in whom a mighty change had been wrought by their having been brought to the knowledge of the gospel; which our apostle expresses after his manner in strong figurative language, viz. ver. 13. *that God had delivered them from the power of darkness, and had translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son*; i. e. brought them out of a state of ignorance and depravity to the knowledge of the gospel of Christ; and that ver. 14. *in him they had redemption (or deliverance) through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*: i. e. they had an assurance of the divine pardon and acceptance for ever (for that is the full meaning of this gospel-phrase, *the forgiveness of sins*,) *by the blood of Christ*, i. e. by his death, by which he confirmed the truth of the doctrine he taught, concerning the divine mercy and benignity. After this, ver. 15. he goes on to raise and exalt their ideas of Christ; calling him, *the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: the image of the invisible God*, because the wisdom, power, and goodness of God were manifested by him, and seen in him: *the first-born*, the chief, *of every creature*, as the first-born is the chief or head of the family; *of every creature*, i. e. of all mankind, jews and gentiles,

tiles, now united together as one people, and become new creatures or a (a) new creation. After which, our apostle's imagination catching flame, as it were, at the idea of the christian world being a new moral and spiritual creation, he goes on after his wonted fine rhetorical manner, to amplify and recommend the character of Christ, as the author of this new creation, as if every being in the universe took part in it, and was affected by it; for by him, proceeds the apostle, *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, &c.*

*Eusebes.* Have you any precedent or example to produce from any other part of the scriptures, for speaking of the new establishment of things by Jesus Christ, the reformation of mankind by his gospel, in such a magnificent stile, as if heaven and earth were changed and created anew by it?

*Artemon.* Yes: there is an example so much to the point, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, that it is not unlikely but our apostle might borrow his language from him. For that lofty animated prophet, treating beforehand of the happy effects of the gospel, introduces the Almighty Being declaring; "*Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth;*

(a) In another place, St. Paul stiles christians new creatures; *If any man be in Christ, (i. e. a christian) he is a new creature. Old things are past away; behold*  
ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW. 2 Cor. v. 17.



earth; and the former ones shall not be remembered, neither shall they be brought to mind any more. But ye shall rejoice and exult in the age to come, which I create (a)." Is. lxxv. 17, 18.

*Eusebes.* There is another passage, at the entrance of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul speaks of *the worlds being made by Christ*. I am thoroughly satisfied from the arguments you have alleged, that the apostle did not believe, and therefore did never intend to call Christ, the creator of the world: but I shall be glad to know how you explain his meaning in this place, where he says; *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his (viz. God's) power, &c.* Heb. i. 1, 2, 3.

*Artemon.* I hope that now, in no long time, all christians will come to see, as you do, that there is but one only true God, and creator of all things; and that Jesus Christ, and all other beings depend upon him for all things, and are such only to us as he makes them to be. In this passage of St. Paul, (Heb. i. 1, 2.) of which you are desirous to have a  
solution,

(a) See Bp. Lowth's most valuable translation; which I have all along cited.

olution, you are to know, that our english translation does not give the proper meaning of the apostle's words, which should be rendered, *for whom he made the ages*, and not, *by whom he made the worlds*. For δι' αἰώνων, *for whom*, is equally agreeable to the original greek. And the word αἰώνας, *eons*, which we translate *worlds*, properly signifies *ages*, or fixed periods of time, in which certain things are done. In reference to which, the time, or times of the law, or of God's dispensation to the Israelites under Moses, is peculiarly called *the age*, αἰών, *eon*; or *ages*, αἰώνες, *eons*, by our Saviour and the writers (a) of the New Testament. Thus at taking his final leave of his disciples, (Matt. xxviii. 20.) *Jesus said*; not, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the WORLD*, as in our common translation; but, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the AGE*, ἕως αἰώνος, *of the eon*; i. e. of the jewish age; as Bishop Pearce well renders and paraphrases

(a) See Locke on 1 Cor. ii. 7. Bishop Pearce well translates Matt. xxiv. 3. not, *the end of the WORLD*, but *the end of the AGE*, i. e. "of the age, during which the jewish church and state was to last." And Joh. ix. 32. not *since the world began*; but *ex αἰώνος*, *from the eon, from the age*; i. e. from the beginning of the time that the law of Moses has subsisted, there are no records of any one thus miraculously opening the eyes of any one that was born blind. See also that valuable commentator, on Acts iii. 21.

paraphrases it. And St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 11. speaking of the Almighty's former visitations of the Israelites for their wickedness, says; *Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and were written for our admonition: not, upon whom the ends of the WORLD are come*, as we now translate it; for St. Paul had no such thing in his thoughts; but, *upon whom the ends of the AGES are come*, *τὴν αἰώνων*, of the *cons*; the ends of the times of the law; i. e. who live under the gospel dispensation. Hence we may conclude, that it was at that time well understood, and a familiar way of speaking with the jews, to call the time of the Mosaic dispensation, *the age*, or *ages*; and most probably was borrowed, as Mr. Locke observes, from the circumstance of their counting by ages, jubilees, periods of fifty years. In agreement with this stile of speech, and much in confirmation of the construction here put upon the apostle's words, Almighty God, by the prophet Isaiah, calls the future times of the Messiah, (as just now cited by me) *the age to come, which I create*, Isa. lxxv. 18. And in like manner, by the same prophet, Christ is foretold to be (ix. 6.) *the Father of (a) the age to come*, i. e. the person who was

(a) Surely it is high time to correct that known false reading, and most glaring self-contradiction in our english bibles, in this famous prophecy of Isaiah ix. 6. In which, Christ, who is spoken of expressly in

was to begin that future age ; or, in our apostle's words, he, for whom God made or created the ages ; with respect to whom he disposed or constituted his several extraordinary dispensations to mankind, and their different periods.

*Eusebes.*

in the very place, *as a child to be born* at some future time, is nevertheless stiled *the everlasting Father*, instead of *the Father of the age to come*. It is not sufficient that learned men know this perversion of the sacred text. It should be made plain and evident to all ; as we find ignorant christians of all ranks, the highest as well as the lowest, continually misled by it to dark and debasing notions of the eternal unchangeable God. Is it to be wondered that many reject a revelation which is supposed to authorize such descriptions of the Deity as the following?

“ *This Infant is the mighty God,*

“ *Come to be suckl'd and ador'd ;*

“ *Th' Eternal Father, Prince of Peace,*

“ *The Son of David, and his Lord,*”

*Watts, Hymn xiii. Book 1.*

How much is it to be regretted, that this worthy author did not revise and purge his hymns before his death ; if he did intend it, as some say he did !

N. B. From the third appendix to the life of Dr. Watts by Dr. Johnson, with notes by Samuel Palmer, 1791. it appears, that Dr. Watts was sensible that his hymns needed amendment in some important points ; but was withheld by weak and unworthy fears from undertaking the work.



*Eusebes.* But does not our apostle, soon after, in this epistle to the hebrews, cite a passage from the scriptures of the Old Testament, in which Christ is expressly stiled God ; where we read thus, *unto the Son he saith ; thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Heb. i. 8.

*Artemon.* It is well known, Eusebes, to the learned, that this passage, which is taken from Psalm xlv. 6. may with equal propriety, be translated; *God is thy throne for ever and ever.* And the lxx. greek translation rather favours this construction. To which I would add, that as the person here spoken of, is, in the next verse, declared to be honoured and exalted for his eminent virtue and love of righteousness by God, *his God*, to whom he owed every thing, it is more natural and fitting to understand the words in this sense, which they will justly and properly bear ; and not to consider them as addressed to Christ as a God ; because it is not the stile of the scriptures so to address any being but the only true God.

## INQUIRY XI.

*Of the doctrine of the apostles, James, and Peter, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* Is there any thing in the other writings of the apostles, that can induce us to imagine that they supposed their great master, Jesus, to be the  
most

most high God ; or that there was any other God, but the Father only ?

*Artemon.* In the epistles of James, and Peter, there is certainly nothing of the kind to be found (a)  
For

(a) I was much surprised to observe bishop Hurd, in his newly published discourses, citing the apostle Peter for holding forth the doctrine of *Three Divine Persons, who are ineffably one God*, and commending him for *accurately distinguishing the respective offices* of these Three Divine Persons : because the authority of men of his character and rank in the church of which he is a member, is apt to weigh much more than it ought to do with many, who will not judge for themselves. It does not, however, look well in persons who are advancing things *strange to natural reason*, as his lordship terms this doctrine, to endeavour to depreciate that natural light, which comes from God, as much as any supernatural one. But it is more blameable when holy scripture is wrongly and carelessly quoted for such a purpose, as is done by the bishop on this occasion. For he should have known, that when St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*, our english version is wrong ; and it ought to have been rendered *the sensual man*, as the same word, *ψυχικός*, is translated, James iii. 17. And also when our Saviour tells his apostles, John xiv. 17, *that the world cannot receive the spirit of truth*, &c. it was easy to see that he means only the corrupt mass of mankind.

In

For in James i. 27. iii. 9. it is plainly and expressly intimated that there is no God but the Father: *Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, &c.* And *Therewith bleſs we God, even the Father.* And it is aſſerted, ii. 19. that *there is only one God*: But if Jeſus Chriſt were God, there would be *two* Gods. And 1 Peter i. 3. God is called the *God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and

In both caſes are to be underſtood, not as the biſhop ſuppoſes, thoſe who make uſe of their natural reaſon, but thoſe who neglected to uſe it. “ On this aſſurance “ then,” ſays his lordſhip, (but in which he is wholly unsupported by the authority on which it is built,) “ we may *reaſonably* believe what by *reaſon* we cannot underſtand. And the ſubſtance of what we “ are to believe on this whole ſubject, is contained in “ a ſingle text of St. Peter, where *the Three Divine “ Perſons, yet ineffably one God, the Trinity in Unity, “ whom we adore, and their reſpective offices, are accurately diſtinguiſhed.* For in the opening of his “ firſt epiſtle, he pronounces the chriſtians, to whom “ he writes, *elect*, that is, entitled to ſalvation, according to the foreknowledge and predetermination of “ God the Father, through the ſanctification of the “ ſpirit unto obedience, and ſprinkling of the blood of “ Jeſus Chriſt.” Biſhop Hurd’s ſermons, vol. ii. 311, 312, 313. It would be difficult for any one to find out *three perſons, who are one God*, in theſe words of the apoſtle, 1 Pet. i. 2. unleſs he came prepared and

and ver. 21. Christ is expressly contradistinguished from God, by the attributes of a dependant mortal creature being given to him, in that he died, and

I 2 had

and resolved to put such a construction upon them. For there is no other person mentioned as God, but the Father: and whether by *the sanctification of the spirit* in consequence of the election of those christians to whom he writes, be understood their being happily distinguished and separated from the rest of the world, by embracing the doctrine which was confirmed by the extraordinary gifts of the spirit of God; or, the salutary effects wrought in their hearts and lives by the gospel, which was dictated by the same spirit; either way, we have no new divine person named, that can be called God; nothing but the power of God. And if *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* be spoken in allusion to Exod. xxiv. 7, 8, and applied to the blessings of the christian covenant, the pardon of sin unto eternal life by the gospel, which Jesus Christ sealed by the shedding of his blood, or confirmed by dying in attestation of it: be it in this, or in any other sense that the words are to be understood, still we have no other Divine Person that can either be called God, or a person or part of the one God. We may not scruple farther to pronounce, that the apostle Peter is much injured by this misrepresentation of his sentiments concerning God and Christ. For upon one occasion we find this fervent apostle receiving high commendations from his Divine master,

Jesus,



had his life restored to him after death. But God cannot die, or be restored to life. The expressions are very strong, and intended to mark that every thing, even under the christian dispensation, comes from God, and is to be acknowledged as such: "*By Christ, says he, ye do believe, or are brought to believe, in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*" To make an end of citations: the genuine sentiments of this apostle, that there is but one God, who is to be honoured and acknowledged by christians, and that Jesus Christ is not God, but his minister and messenger to mankind; fully appear by that doxology at the conclusion of this epistle, viz. *The God of all favour, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile*

Jesus, for his honest confession, in owning him to be *the Christ, the Son of the living God*; (Matt. xvi. 13---17) when almost all others disowned him in that character. But will the bishop say, that Christ can be Son of the living God, and the living God himself, at one and the same time; And if he be the Son of the living God, that is, received his being from him, how can he be equal to the living God the Father, from whom he received his being? See also Peter's declaration of his sentiments concerning God and Christ, very different from those his lordship would fix upon him, in Acts ii. 22, to 37; iii. 13, 22; iv. 24, 27.

*awhile, make you perfect, strengthen, stablish you.  
To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

*1 Pet. v. 10, 11.*

## INQUIRY XII.

*Of the doctrine of the apostle John, in his epistles,  
concerning God and Christ?*

*Eusebes.* I BEG to know, Artemon, what I am to make of that singular text, 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:* Does it not, as it now stands, countenance the strange opinion of God dying for us?

*Artemon.* You might call it not only a strange, but a shocking opinion. The scriptures however are quite clear of the imputation of favouring any thing of this kind. And in the text you have quoted, the words [*of God,*] are not found in any ancient copies of the New Testament, except one of no credit. They also are discarded by three of the most learned inquirers into these subjects, Mill, Westein, and Bengelius. I find them not in the French translations of Martin, or of L'Enfant and Beaufobre. And they ought not to be suffered any longer to have a place in our english bibles; because they were not the words of the apostle; and because whilst they remain a part of the scripture, they do great mischief, by instilling unbecoming sentiments of Almighty God into the minds of christians;

and false opinions concerning Jesus Christ, as if he were really God.

*Eusebes.* You must now give me leave to ask your opinion concerning that famous text in this first epistle of John, which speaks of three Divine Persons being one, in such plain terms; where the apostle says, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.* 1 John v. 7, 8. Are not we here taught that the Son and holy Spirit are one God with the Father?

*Artemon.* If the part of this verse, that seems to countenance such a notion, were genuine, it would not prove that the *Three* here mentioned are *one* God, For it is not said *these three are* [*us, unus*] one intelligent being, *one Person*; but *us, one thing*; i. e. one and the same *testimony*. But the truth is, the passage is not of the writing of St. John, but crept into some latin manuscripts of the New Testament in later times, and has been thence falsely ascribed to him by the over-great zeal of some persons, who were glad to have him a patron of their favourite doctrine of the Trinity. For the words (*in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness on earth*) have never been proved to be found in the text of any greek manuscript, before the inven-  
tion

tion of printing: nor in the text of any ancient version; nor were cited by any of the numerous writers in the whole Arian controversy in the fourth century; and were wanting in all the latin copies both before and long after Cyprian's time. They ought therefore to be erased out of our bibles. In the first *english* bibles after the reformation, in the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. these suspected words were honestly printed differently from the rest, to signify that they were wanting in the original; which distinction was afterwards neglected, but ought to have been (*a*) kept up, to prevent the nation being imposed upon, and misled in a point of such great moment. And the sense of the apostle is very complete (*b*) without this

(*a*) It ought to be mentioned to the credit of the author of *A New Translation of the New Testament, extracted from the paraphrase of Dr. Doddridge, 1765*; that he has marked these words as not being those of the apostle; and has also left out the words *of God*, in 1 John iii. 16. They are also both left out in an edition of the New Testament in greek and english, printed for Roberts, 1729; and perhaps in others that I have not seen.

(*b*) This explanation is Dr. Clark's; See *Scripture Doctrines*, p. 231. But some may be pleased with Dr. Lardner's explanation of this obscure passage, 1 Joh. v. 5, 10, as more agreeing with the apostle's stile and manner.



this addition, as we find his words given us in all the greek manuscripts and antient translations of the New Testament, ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* ver. 6. *This is he that came* (i. e. was declared and manifested to be the Son of God) *by water and blood* (i. e. by water, at his baptism, when there came a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son* : and *by blood*, i. e. by his death and resurrection :) — *And it is the spirit* (i. e. the gifts of the holy spirit, and the power of miracles

manner. “ To me, it seems, (says he) that the *water*, an emblem of purity, (Ezek. xxxvi. 25.) denotes the innocence of our Lord’s life, which was without spot, exemplary; and the reasonableness, excellence, and perfection of his doctrine, which after the strictest examination, and nicest scrutiny, cannot be charged with any error or falsehood. The *blood* denotes our Lord’s willing and patient, though painful and ignominious death; the utmost testimony that can be given of integrity. The *spirit* intends our Lord’s many miraculous works, wrought by the spirit, the finger, the power of God, or God himself. This testimony is *truth*, that is exceeding true, so that it may be relied upon. For it is unquestionable, and cannot be gainsaid. See John v. 32, 37, x. 25. Acts ii. 22. Here are three witnesses. And *they agree in one*. They are harmonious, all saying the same thing, and concurring in the same testimony.” *Lardner’s Letter on the Logos, &c.* p. 164, 165.

miracles granted to the apostles) *that beareth witness; because the spirit is truth, (ver. 7.) For there are three that bear record; the spirit, the water, and the blood; and those three agree in one: or, as some ancient writers read the text; these three are one, viz. one testimony, that Jesus is the Son of God.*

*Eusebes.* Is there not one other passage in this epistle, from which some have argued that Christ is to be considered as the true God?

*Artemon.* The 20th verse of the fifth chapter, has by later christians had this meaning put upon it, which was never thought of in the first ages of the gospel. Nor would any since have given into such an interpretation, had they considered the words and their connection, without prejudice. For it is of God, (a) the Father only, that the apostle speaks, when he says; (1 John v. 20.) *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is True, or rather, may know the True God, τὸν ἀληθινὸν Θεόν.* (So the most and best manuscripts have it, in like manner as John xvii. 3. The apostle proceeds). *And we are in him that is True by his Son, Jesus Christ; that is, in the True God; for so the construction manifestly requires it to be understood of the same person as before. He then concludes; This is the True God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. The*  
meaning

(a) See Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine, &c. p. 54,

meaning is; this is the true God, and the way that leads to him; the true religion, and way to eternal life, viz. the worship of the true God according to the directions, or as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Beware of idol-worship.

*Eusebes.* In the last book of the New Testament, I find Almighty God introduced, and speaking concerning himself; (Revel. i. 8.) *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.* A little after however, (ver. 11.) Jesus Christ is brought in, and says; *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*; and again, ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead*: Are not here the same titles given to Jesus Christ as to Almighty God? Must not he therefore be some way or other, the Almighty God?

*Artemon.* What great necessity is there, Eusebes, for a new translation of the Bible? That part of the eleventh verse, [*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and*] is known, and acknowledged by all learned men, not to be the writing of the apostle, being not found in the most and the best manuscripts, or in the antient versions of the New Testament; and is therefore justly left out of several editions of the greek Testament. The words then ought not to be retained in our english bibles. As to ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last, and I am he that liveth and was dead.* It is plain these words cannot be spoken of God, but of a creature, who was made subject to death and mortality

mortality. If men made any use of their understanding, they must see that such things can never be ascribed to the *living and true God*.

Eusebes. There remains only one passage more, Artemon, relating to our Saviour Christ, concerning which I am desirous to have your sentiments. It is in *Revelation* ii. 23, where Christ is ushered in speaking concerning himself; "*All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the heart, and the reins*." Does not this seem to imply that the person who speaks is the omniscient being, is God: for it is the peculiar attribute of God to know the heart?

Artemon. A little attention will convince you, Eusebes, that nothing of this sort will be found to be deducible from our Saviour's language in this place. For you must consider it, in connection with other parts of his character, and the account which the writer of this book gives of him. Now St. John thus prefaces his work: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass*." From which it is evident, that the book contains a revelation, or discovery of such things as Jesus did not know of himself, but had them communicated to him from Almighty God. And consequently, this *searching of the heart and reins*, which he attributes to himself, must be such a degree of knowledge of what related to those apostolic churches,

as



as was imparted to him in that first age of our religion, when it was thought proper that an extraordinary Divine Power should be exerted in the direction and government of the infant christian church; and in this latitude, and no farther, it is to be understood. With the same restriction we are to take the apostle Peter's reply to his divine master; (John xxi. 17.) *Lord, thou knowest ALL things; thou knowest that I love thee.* He only meant, that by the great power he had received from God, the Lord Jesus was acquainted with the secret thoughts and dispositions of those he conversed with, and especially of himself and his fellow apostles. This interpretation is illustrated and confirmed by those words of the apostle John, to the persons to whom he sent his first epistle; *ye have an unction from the Holy one, and ye know ALL things.* 1 John ii. 20. None will imagine him to intend to describe these christians as gods, omniscient. What he therein tells them is, that they had the full knowlege of the christian doctrine divinely communicated to them; especially in what related to the persons he had immediately before been speaking of; whose grievous errors concerning Christ, he specifies immediately after; ver. 21. 22.

INQUIRY

## INQUIRY XIII.

*Of the sentiment and doctrine of Christ and his Apostles,  
concerning the Spirit, or Holy Spirit.*

*Eusebes.* You have convinced me that our Saviour Christ never intimated, in the least degree, that he was the most high God; and that neither his apostles, nor the evangelists ever taught any thing of the kind; but, the contrary. I must now beg leave to trouble you with my inquiries, what it is that the scriptures really teach concerning the Spirit, or *holy Spirit*. For many christians look upon this to be God, the most high God, equal to the Father; and accordingly pray to him and worship him. Do our Saviour and his apostles teach that there is any such person who is God, and to be worshiped by us?

*Artemon.* Our Saviour and his apostles appear utterly unacquainted with any God, or Divine Person, called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, distinct from the heavenly Father of all, whom they stile the only true God.

*Eusebes.* Upon what grounds do you say this?

*Artemon.* Upon this sure ground, that we never find that either Christ or his apostles either prayed  
K them-

themselves, or directed others to pray and give thanks, or pay any religious acknowledgements to any such Divine Person, called the Spirit, the holy Spirit, as they do to God, the Father, continually; and which assuredly they would not have neglected here, had there been any such person who was God, equal to the Father. And moreover, although they make mention of the gifts of the Spirit, these gifts are never described as asked of, or given by the Spirit; which unquestionably would have been at least sometimes done, had there been any such person, (a) who was God, and equally with the Father, to be acknowledged and worshiped.

*Eusebes.* But does not Christ speak of *blasphemy against the holy Spirit*, as a sin never to be forgiven? And does not this argue, that he must be God, against whom this sin is said to be committed?

*Artemon.*

(a) “ Some things in the prescribed form of Ordination of priests and deacons, in the church of England, he did not approve, and could not use; particularly the hymn;

“ *Come holy Ghost, eternal God,*

“ *Proceeding from above, &c.*”

Memoirs of the life of Dr. Sam. Clarke,  
by Mr. Emlyn, p. 493.

*Artemon.* The passage you allude to is in Matthew xii. 31, 32. and runs thus, "*Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men; and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven: but whosoever speaketh against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" You here perceive that there is no such language used as that of *sin against the holy Spirit*; but only *blasphemy of the Spirit*, or speaking against the holy Spirit. And it is evident, that our Saviour, by the Spirit, or holy Spirit, here mentioned by him, meant only that divine power, by which he was enabled to work the miracle which was here cavilled at. For by comparing the parallel accounts of the same transaction by St. Matthew and St. Luke; [Matth. xii. 28. *But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God, is come unto you:* Luke xi. 20. *But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you:*] you find that what the former calls *the Spirit of God*, the other calls *the finger of God*. From which it is obvious, that it is not any Divine Person that is here called the Spirit of God, but that it is only the finger or power of God, which is so termed; that power, by which Christ was enabled to do his miraculous works.



And the great sin of these Jews, called *the blasphemy of the Spirit, or speaking against the holy Spirit*, lay in this ; that though they could not deny the miraculous cure wrought by Jesus upon the demoniac, they insisted on it being done by a communication with Belzebub, the prince of demons, and not by any power from God : which shewed their obstinate and incorrigible wickedness, and that they were incapable of forgiveness, because incapable of repentance, whilst such dispositions remained in them.

*Eusebes.* Is the Spirit, or holy Spirit, in other places of scripture, to be understood of an extraordinary power, and gift, or gifts from God ; and not as being a Divine Person, or intelligent agent ?

*Artemon.* Yes : it is very generally so to be understood ; especially in the writings of the New Testament. Thus our Saviour encourages his apostles, Matth. x. 19, 20. *When they deliver you up (to be judged for the gospel sake) be not anxious how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* St. Mark and Luke, in the parallel places, call it *the holy Spirit*. All of them doubtless thereby intended the Divine influence. Thus also it is said of Christ himself, John iii. 34. *He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.*

Sometimes

Sometimes it signifies those particular extraordinary gifts which were predicted and promised by Christ, and bestowed upon the apostles and first christians, after his resurrection. Thus after our Saviour had spoken in highly figurative terms, borrowed from their ancient prophets, of some great blessings which his followers were to derive from him: the sacred historian remarks upon it; (John vii. 39.) *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* Here it is obvious, that the Spirit, or holy Spirit, stands for those extraordinary divine gifts or powers, that were afterwards bestowed on the followers of Christ..

*Eusebes.* But do not the terms in which our Saviour mentions the extraordinary aids which would be given to his followers, plainly bespeak the holy Spirit to be a real person, though inferior to Christ, as one sent by him, and in some measure put under his direction? As for instance, where he says, John xiv. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And xvi. 7, &c. *It is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you but*

ye cannot hear them now. *Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

*Artemon.* Every one must interpret and judge for himself in these matters. And so long as he looks upon the Spirit to be an inferior agent, employed by God, and not the most high God; there can be nothing contradictory to the other parts of scripture, to suppose it to be a person really existing. But the contrary sentiment is more agreeable to the general tenor of the scriptures, and the stile in which they are written, to consider the *spirit of truth* here as personified, represented as a person, by a very usual figure of speech, in the sacred, and in other writers. Thus, as I have had occasion to mention to you before in the course of our conversation, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, to inculcate the belief of an all-wise providence, by which the world ~~was~~ first made, and all things are governed; *Wisdom* is introduced as a *Divine Person*, and described, as dwelling and conversing with God from all eternity, and particularly engaged and concerned in the creation of this world of ours, and in the affairs of mankind. St. Paul also, 1 Cor. xiii. holds forth *Charity*, or benevolence, with the attributes of a person really existing and acting. And in the same

way

way our Saviour, in the words which you have just now quoted, very naturally tells his sorrowful and dejected disciples, that the extraordinary assistance that would be given them after his departure from them, would be as it were, another Comforter or Advocate to them in his stead, who would plead their cause and be always with them ; by whom they would be the more fully confirmed in the belief of those things which they had heard from him, and would have many of their prejudices removed, which threw a mist before their eyes, whilst he was in person with them ; and the success of his gospel be effectually promoted ; which he calls his being glorified by the spirit. There is a beauty and energy in this animated style of description far beyond that of a plainer narrative : nor would it be easy to mistake it, if men did not come to the reading of the scriptures with a wrong bias on their minds, to which they bend every thing they meet with.

This interpretation is confirmed, as has been often observed, by the evangelist St. Luke, in his book of *The Acts* ; in which he records the fulfilment of this promise of our Saviour's, of sending the Comforter, the holy Spirit, to his disciples. For there we find no new powerful intelligent agent, or real divine person, introduced ; but only a plentiful effusion of miraculous gifts bestowed upon the apostles. And there is additional strength given to this interpretation, from *the holy spirit* being the  
common



common phrase by which christians spoke of these extraordinary divine powers, which were in the first age conferred upon them in great abundance. Thus the apostle Peter, vindicating the calling of the gentiles to the knowlege of the gospel, without being made subject to the law of Moses ; says, Acts xv. 8. *God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the holy Spirit, even as he did unto us.* And Acts xix. 2. *Paul said unto them ; have ye received the holy Spirit since ye believed ? And they said unto him ; we have not so much as heard whether there be any holy Spirit.* In all these instances none can doubt but that by the *holy Spirit* is meant those miraculous gifts then bestowed on believers of the gospel. But see *The Acts* throughout.

*Eusebes.* But how, I pray, am I to interpret that language of St. Peter, where he seems expressly to stile the holy Spirit, God ? It is in *Acts* v. 3. where the apostle is mentioned, as saying to the man, who pretended he had given in his whole substance to the common stock, whilst he kept back part of it ; “ *Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land ?—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*”

*Artemon.* Nothing but the force of strong early prejudice in favour of the doctrine learnt in your childhood, could ever make you or any sensible person entertain the most distant thought that there was another God, called the holy Spirit, or holy Ghost,

here

here spoken of, distinct and different from the one living and true God, the Father : whom the uniform language of the holy scriptures throughout proclaimeth to be the only true God, and no other person whatever to be in any way equal or like unto him. There is no difficulty in comprehending that Ananias might be said by lying to the holy Spirit to lie to God himself ; since by endeavouring to pass a fraud upon the apostles, who acted by a divine extraordinary power, amounted to the same as endeavouring to impose upon God himself, from whom they received that power, and whose ministers they were. So Luke x. 16. our Lord says to his apostles ; “ *He that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* ” Now although he that despised the apostles, despised not only Christ, but God himself ; it did not hence follow, that Christ was God, or that his apostles were Gods.

*Eusebes.* May I ask you, Artemon, in what way you interpret that pious conclusion of one of St. Paul's epistles ; (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) *The grace (or favour) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be with you all ?* Is not the holy Spirit put there upon the same rank with God himself ; and said to communicate blessings to christians ?

*Artemon.* You well know, Eusebes, that it is by no means to be inferred from things or persons being

being coupled in this manner together, that they are therefore all of the same kind or rank : for if so, you might conclude that the angels were Gods, from that passage in 1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*; and so on. The apostle here, by saying, *the communion of the holy spirit be with you*, intends only to express a devout wish, that they to whom he writes might be partakers of the extraordinary gifts, and of all the blessings of the gospel.

*Eusebes.* I am often at a loss how to understand that exhortation of the apostle, Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* Does it not imply that the holy Spirit is a distinct divine person, who takes an interested part in the affairs of man's salvation?

*Artemon.* You will find it very easy and intelligible, without recurring to such strange and groundless suppositions, by taking this along with you in your interpretation of it; viz. that the Spirit, or holy Spirit of God, is sometimes put for God himself; as the spirit of a man signifies the man himself. This is taught by St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 11. when he observes; *what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.* This exhortation then, of *not grieving the holy Spirit of God*, is to be understood, of not grieving the Almighty Being himself, who had sealed,

sealed, &c. i. e. had favoured these Ephesian christians with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. And to him it is they were not to give concern, by their improper behaviour and mismanagement of his gifts. The very same phrase is used by the prophet Isaiah, as expressive of the most compassionate regards of Almighty God for his people Israel: when speaking of their great wickedness, he says; *they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit*, Isaiah lxiii. 10.

Or, perhaps, you may not dislike this other interpretation; viz. that the holy Spirit, which they were not to grieve, is put for persons who were endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. As when St. Paul says; Acts xx. 23. *The holy Spirit witnesseth in every city; saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me*; he means it of persons who had the holy Spirit, to whom an extraordinary divine revelation had been made of the sufferings he was to undergo for the sake of the gospel. So here likewise, (and it admirably suits the connection of the apostle's discourse with what goes before and follows after,) he is to be understood as saying; "Grieve not, by your light conversation or dissensions, those good men, who labour for your salvation: for which service they have the extraordinary gifts and assistance of the spirit of God bestowed upon them."

*Eusebes.* I shall trouble you with but one question more on this matter, and that is, to know at what time it was, that christians first began publicly



licly to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a distinct God, and object of worship; which you have proved to me to have no authority or support from the word of God?

*Artemon.* It is a fact of great notoriety, that the Holy Spirit was not publicly acknowledged as God, and to be worshiped as such, for the first three hundred years after Christ. It is also remarkable, that at the famous council of Nice, in the year 325, all that was inserted about the holy Spirit, was barely, "I believe in the holy Spirit." That which makes the principal part of the Nicene Creed now, relating to the Holy Spirit, did not originally belong to it, but was added about half a century afterwards, in the second general council, as it is called, of Constantinople. The words then added after "I believe in the Holy Ghost" were these, "The Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." So that there is no colour of foundation in the holy scripture for the belief of any person called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, as being God: and the worship of this Spirit, as a Divine Person, did not become publicly authorized among christians, 'till they were sinking into the very dregs of pagan idolatry. For, about this period, that is, at the latter end of the fourth century, came in the wor-  
ship

ship of dead men and women, called Saints; and the worship of their bones, hair, garments, and other things belonging to them, called *relics*.

# INQUIRY XIV.

*Of the origin of the very early and lasting errors among christians, concerning God and Christ.*

*Eusebes.* I AM highly obliged to you, Artemon, for the satisfaction you have given me in all my questions and doubts that I have proposed to you. You have demonstrated to me, from the sacred writings, and the words of Christ and his apostles in particular; that there is no other person who is God, but the Father only. - If it would not detain you too long, I would beg the favour of you, before we part, to set my mind at rest a little, by acquainting me, how it came to pass; by what steps and degrees it was, that the whole christian world fell away from this knowlege and adoration of the one only and true God, the Father, and joined two other persons with him, whom they called God the Son, and God the holy Ghost, or holy Spirit; each of whom they looked upon as equally God with the Father, and equally to be adored by them?

*Artemon.* You must not mistake here, Eusebes. All christians did not decline from the worship of the one living and true God, the Father, to the worship of two other persons, who were not Gods.

The jews, who in no small number at first embraced christianity, (a) never departed from the doctrine of the Divine Unity, but preserved it pure and uncorrupt, whilst they were suffered to remain in their own country; and afterwards carried it along with them into other countries, where they were dispersed. These early jewish christians, who were such strict Unitarians, might have been a means of keeping the heathens, that in such great numbers were converted to the gospel, steady in this most important article, if they had been upon good terms with each other. And this was a point which St. Paul had much at heart, and laboured most earnestly

(a) Ancients and moderns bear testimony to the stedfast adherence of these jewish christians to the doctrine of the Divine Unity, although some of these christian writers, who had degenerated from this great truth themselves, are pleased to call that an error, which was taught by Moses first, and afterwards by Jesus and his apostles. See Beaufobre Hist. de Manich. tom. ii. p. 517. where he quotes the famous Athanasius, relating, "*that in the time of the apostles, the jews were in this error, and drew the gentiles into it; viz. that Christ is only a mere man, and not God; and that the word was not flesh*"; meaning, we may suppose, by the last clause, that these early jewish believers did not consider the *word*, the *logos*, in the beginning of John's gospel, as a name of Christ, but an attribute of God himself.

earnestly to promote; as every one must have observed who is acquainted with his history, and reads his epistles.

*Eusebes.* What might it be that made the jewish and heathen converts not unite so cordially with each other?

*Artemon.* The jewish christians could not be brought to give up at once their old religious customs; which is not to be wondered at, as they had had the sanction of divine authority for them, tho' that authority was superseded by the gospel; but they continued to observe distinctions of days, and meats, and the like, which unavoidably kept them at an unsocial distance from other christians, who paid no regard to these things. And St. Paul, though he thought such an attachment a weakness, yet did he not condemn it as sinful in his countrymen, so long as they did not impose such observances on others, nor make them necessary to salvation.

*Eusebes.* Was there any thing else that kept them asunder from each other?

*Artemon.* The jewish christians being poor, through the troubles and distresses of their country, which ended in its utter destruction; and being also in general unskilled in philosophy and the learning of the times, were too much despised and undervalued by the learned heathen converts, who paid little regard to their sentiments, and took the lead in every thing.



*Eusebes.* How high can you trace the beginning of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ?

*Artemon.* The first appearance of it was in the very days of the apostles, and took its rise from the heathen converts chiefly, and some few perhaps of the jews mixed with them, who were tingured with their learning and philosophy.

*Eusebes.* What might it be that gave immediate occasion to their deviation from the doctrine of the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ?

*Artemon.* Certain philosophical notions of theirs, mixed with vanity and worldly prejudices, made them unwilling to believe, and ashamed to own, that the founder of their religion was a mortal man, who suffered an ignominious and painful death upon a cross: and therefore they persuaded themselves, and maintained, that he was not a man in reality, nor suffered in reality, but in appearance only.

*Eusebes.* Where is there any mention made in the New Testament of this strange perversion of the truth concerning Christ?

*Artemon.* St. Paul appears to have had a foresight of these errors before they had grown to any great height, and gave faithful warning of them, in his frequent cautions concerning their subtle, endless disputes and speculations of the platonic, or rather oriental philosophy, relating to the Deity, and the different emanations from him. *Beware,* (says he) Coloss.

Coloss. ii. 8, 9.) lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead, (rather of the divine power) bodily. And 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called. Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. You will do well also to consult 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, Tit. iii. 9. But the apostle John lived to see these errors spring up, and bear much bitter fruit. It is the obvious main design of his two first epistles, which were written when he was far advanced in years, to censure and bear testimony against certain christians, who denied Jesus Christ to be (a) come in flesh; (b) that is,

L 3

would

(a) The Manichean christians, who fell into great errors, are known to have drank deep of this in particular; so as to have denied Christ to have had any human nature at all. Ambrose, speaking of these men, by way of reproof, says, "cum Manichæus adoraverit, quem in carne venisse non credidit." i. e. they worshipped Christ, though they did not believe him to have come in flesh; to have been a man. This shews how the ancients understood the phrase of Christ coming in flesh; namely, of his being really a man; See Lardner's Credibility, part 2. vol. vi. p. 276.

(b) Perhaps the apostle's words might be thus more properly,

would not allow Christ to have been really a man; but one in appearance only. You cannot but perceive how offensive such a doctrine must be to the venerable apostle, who, in perfect agreement with the other apostles and evangelists, constantly speaks of Christ as a man, liable to sufferings and death, as others were; and describes the ill treatment and opposition he met with in the cause of divine truth, especially

properly given in english; that these men did not confess, or denied, that Jesus, who came in flesh, was the Christ. For this, see a letter of Limborch to Mr. Locke, where he points out the mistake of the French translation of 2 John 7. the same as in our own; and that it ought not to be as in our present translation; *many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh—but who confess not that Jesus who came in flesh, is the Christ*: and he observes, that in like manner, the rendering of 1 John iv. 2, 3, should be altered. *Locke's Works*, vol. iv. p. 425. Bishop of Carlisle's edition.

There is a difficulty in coming at the exact meaning of these first innovators and corrupters of the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ. We find that they separated the Christ from Jesus, because they would not have it supposed that the Christ was a man, which Jesus confessedly was. They seem to have thought that the Christ was an emanation of the Deity, the first begotten of the Father, who descended

upon

especially the distress and pain he underwent, before and at the time of his death, as most grievous to him, and appointed by God, as for other ends, so particularly for the trial of his obedience: and his patience, fortitude, and resignation under them, are mentioned as the things for which he was worthily exalted to honour by the supreme Father; and are continually held forth as an example and encouragement to his followers under their trials. As these great ends of the gospel were wholly defeated by the groundless conceit of these men concerning Christ, we cannot wonder to see the disciple whom Jesus shewed an especial affection for, and who could not but be well acquainted with him, in his letter upon this subject, striking abruptly, all

upon Jesus at his baptism, when he wrought miracles, and declared the will of the unknown Father; and which afterwards continued to be united in Jesus, but no farther than was necessary for the discharge of his great office; and that when his ministry was finished, the Christ being spiritual, and incapable of suffering, left him, and Jesus was taken, and put to death on the cross, and raised again to life. See Beaufobre, *Hist. de Manich.* p. 28.—and his notes on the epistle of St. John; and Lardner's *Hist. of Heretics*, in Basilides, Cerinthus, and Marcion; a curious, valuable work, *unic* in our language.



(a) all at once as it were into it, in the very beginning; and maintaining by a variety of strong expression and argument, that he had the most absolute undeniable evidence, and conviction, that his Divine Master, the great Teacher of eternal life from God, was really a man. He afterwards takes up the subject again and again, in the course of this his first epistle, and also in the second; and through the whole shews himself exceedingly hurt and disturbed, that he should live to see any so obstinate and shameless as to call it in question.

*Eusebes.* I should be glad to be informed, *Artemon*, if there be any collateral testimony of ancient authors, to corroborate this account which you give of *St. John's* design in writing these epistles; and which shews that these first christians are justly chargeable with so gross an error concerning Christ, as you here impute to them?

*Artemon.* There is scarcely any point in so remote antiquity, of which we are better assured.

*Ignatius,*

*(a) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard, &c.*  
1 John i. 1, 2, 3.

Ignatius, Irenæus, Jerom, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Augustin, speak of it very particularly, and condemn it. And the learned moderns, who have been most conversant in these matters, take notice of it; Petavius, Cotelierius, Le Clerc, Tillotson, Beausobre, Lardner. Indeed it cannot be justly doubted, or denied. And whatever other antichrist there may be in the world, the chief antichristian (a) error of those early times, and that which is stigmatized as such by our apostle, was, *the denying Christ to have been really a man, subject to infirmities, suffering, and death.*

*Eusebes.* What, I pray, was the farther progress of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning Christ?

*Ariemon.* Such an immediate, open, and direct confutation and condemnation of it, by an apostle of Christ, seems to have given such a check to it, that it died away of itself in the course of a few years; and we hear no more of any that were so absurd as to maintain it. But the seeds of it, alas! still remained, and produced the most lasting and fatal corruption of the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ, which continues wide spread to this day. For these learned heathen converts to christianity,

(a) Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not, that Jesus, who came in flesh, is the Christ. This is a deceiver, and an ANTICHRIST. 2 John 7.

christianity, were still ashamed of the cross of Christ; and not content with such a Saviour as the scriptures held forth to them. And therefore, as it was the doctrine of their schools, before they embraced the gospel, that there was one supreme God over all, and (a) a second God, an inferior spirit, made by him, and his under-agent, in creating

(a) Justin Martyr, in his second apology, (*Paris* ed. 1615. p. 92, 93.) asserts that "Moses and Plato and the christians, were all agreed about the creation of the world by the *word* of God." And in the same place he remarks, that "Plato received from Moses what he utters in his *Timæus*, concerning the Son of God, or the Power next to the Chief God;" as he there terms it. A little before, in the same work, he had said, p. 74. "The first power, next after God, the Father, and sovereign Lord of all, is the *word* and Son; but in what manner being made flesh, he became a man, I shall shew hereafter." How much better would it have been if this worthy man had abstained from blending Plato's philosophy with the gospel; and instead of maintaining that a mighty pre-existent Spirit, next to God, and the subordinate creator of all things, was born of the virgin Mary, in the state of an helpless infant; had contented himself with what was the obvious meaning of the scriptures on this head, viz. that by the holy Spirit, or miraculous power of God, Christ was produced and born of Mary, a virgin, out of the ordinary course of generation, as Adam was first created by the same power.

ing the world; they took it for granted, from some expressions of the gospel ill understood, particularly in the entrance of St. John's gospel, that Christ was the second God of their philosophy, who took flesh of the virgin Mary, and became a man. And from this they went on to assert; that it was he that made the world, (*a*) who appeared to the patriarchs, and to Moses, and who was the ostensible and acting God and governor of the nation of Israel; whilst the supreme God lived retired, and was always invisible. This was the capital mistake which that good man, and ingenious writer, Justin Martin fell into; who embraced christianity about twelve years after the death of the apostle John. Though a native of Palestine he was very ignorant of the hebrew language; and nevertheless presumed to put his own sense upon the hebrew scriptures, and that intirely different from what any jew before had ever espoused, and to which Christ and his apostles appear to have been utter strangers. Unhappily, having been bred a philosopher, and enveloped in heathen darkness, he could not shake off his former opinions and prejudices, but grafted them upon his new religion, and has misled many wiser and more able men than himself,

(*a*) This most strange doctrine of Christ being the agent Deity of the Old World, is considered at large, in ch. vi. of "A Sequel to the Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick."



himself, in all ages to the present. But this error concerning Christ did not stop here. These heathen converts to christianity, went on afterwards deviating more and more from the doctrine of the holy scriptures in this matter; till, at length, it came to be established at the council of Nice, in the year 325, under the sanction of imperial authority; (an authority however of no value in the things of religion) that Jesus Christ was *very God, of one substance with the Father, and the person by whom all things were made.*

## INQUIRY XV.

*Why such early and lasting corruptions of the gospel have been permitted.*

*Eusebes.* EXCUSE me, I beg, if I detain you one moment longer. These corruptions of our holy religion, of which you have been speaking, with others of the like sort, are thought by many to bear hard against it, as if a system so imperfect, so soon abused, and so inadequate to the reformation of mankind, could not come from God. You will do me a singular kindness by favouring me with your sentiments on this intricate point.

*Artemon.* Depend upon it, Eusebes, these are objections that spring only from our ignorance. We do not enough consider how lately we were brought into being, and what unfinished creatures

we are, to whom this divine revelation is made; and we pronounce too hastily concerning the designs of God in it, all which may be answered, and be most worthy of him, though far short of our expectations. All that can rightly be called the gospel of Christ, the way to eternal life, is a plain intelligible doctrine. Yet at first, and in all times since, having been delivered to and received by men with a thousand wrong habits and ways of thinking on divine subjects rivetted in them, these would unavoidably mix themselves with their new religion, and deprave it more or less, without some extraordinary interposition to prevent it, and to give a new cast to their minds; which did not take place, nor were there any grounds to expect it. Some also would be found, who out of interested, and other unworthy motives, would set themselves to lower and debase the purity of this heavenly institution. Here then were some very natural impediments in its way, which were likely to obstruct its progress and good effects. And it is a satisfaction to observe, that these offences and obstacles to the truth, were foretold in the christian scriptures in a very particular manner, and the faithful servants of God forewarned and instructed what part they were to act in such seasons of prevailing degeneracy and corruption. So that as you are fully convinced, as every fair unprejudiced inquirer will be, that Jesus was *a Teacher*, (John iii. 2.) *come from God*,  
that

that is, who spoke and acted by a divine authority; and that we have his message and instructions to men, faithfully recorded and preserved: You need not be disturbed about their fate and reception in the world. It is the cause of God, and he will see to it.

But we cannot be contented with God's way, and methods with us, and to wait his time. We are for having perfection immediately to be bestowed upon ourselves: happiness without mixture of pain; knowledge without error. And some will presume to blame, that so much perplexity, pain, and evil is admitted into his works, as if they had more compassion and goodness than the kind Creator and Father of all. But we should remember, that this life is but the beginning of our existence; and that our Maker's benevolent plan and purpose for us reaches through all time; is not merely to confer present happiness, although this abounds amongst mankind; but that which is to last for ever. And if the avenue that leads to it, be at times dark and uncomfortable, we may not doubt but that it was so contrived with the kindest design, because Infinite Wisdom saw that it would tend to our greater virtuous improvement, and final felicity. His watchful providence we see continually at work, and producing an increase and overflow of good from those very corruptions of true religion, of which you complain. For the perversion  
sion

sion and abuse of the Scriptures has excited enquiry, and the study of those invaluable writings : which otherwise might have been wholly neglected ; and we in these latter ages might have been deprived of many advantages for the better understanding and defence of them, which we now enjoy. A conviction also of the weakness, ignorance, and fallibility of our nature, which always cleaves to us in the midst of our researches into the word and will of God, makes us more forbearing and equitable towards those that dissent from us, and tends to beget in us a spirit of just humility and teachableness ; which are qualities and dispositions of much more consequence to our future happiness and progressive improvements, than the most accurate extensive knowlege which we could lay in here. And perhaps that prevailing love, preference, and regard for God, for truth and righteousness above all other things, by which alone we can be fixed in complete and permanent happiness, could only be generated in us, by the obstacles, difficulties, temptations, and sufferings, which we have to encounter with, and to overcome in our way to attain it, in this our probationary state. That sympathy and benevolent concern for the virtuous attainments and final happiness of our fellow-creatures, which will likewise make one of the chief ingredients of our own bliss in the heavenly state, could not, it may be, have been so effectually pro-



duced in us, if we had not been so connected together, and dependent on each other here for our future, as well as present welfare. But this divine constitution of things under which we are placed, where it is not seriously attended to, becomes the source of great errors and much evil. If you take no pains to instruct those who belong to, and depend upon you, they must want the means of virtuous improvement here, and suffer hereafter by your neglect. And if you now, Eusebes, who declare yourself to be convinced that there is but one God and Father of all, should go on to acknowledge and worship other persons as Gods, Jesus, and the holy Spirit; your better knowledge is given you in vain. Others are not benefited by it, as they ought to be. You mislead those who are made to look up to you for guidance and instruction: for which you will be accountable.

I thank you, Artemon, for the friendly hint in your conclusion. I shall endeavour to profit by it. But I must crave your kind assistance at some future opportunity, to state and consider this matter of religious worship at full length. For some, you know, who do not allow Jesus Christ to be God; who hold him only to be a man invested with extraordinary divine powers, do yet contend that he ought to be invoked in prayer, and worshiped. And I would willingly have no doubts upon a point of such moment left upon my mind.

THE END.

**FIVE**  
**S E R M O N S**  
**ON**  
**DIFFERENT SUBJECTS.**

LINE 2

3 E 11 M 0 11 3

NO

DIRECTOR OF THE

F I V E  
S E R M O N S

ON THE  
FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, VIZ.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,  
AND THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING IN DANGER.

THE SCRIPTURE IDEA OF HERESY.

MYSTERIES MADE PLAIN.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

THE PLACE, OBJECT, AND MANNER OF CHRISTIAN  
WORSHIP.

---

By GEORGE ROGERS, M.A.

RECTOR OF SPROUGHTON, IN SUFFOLK, AND LATE  
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

---

L O N D O N:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCHII.



1944

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND  
FREDERICK,  
LORD BISHOP OF DERRY.

---

AMONG the *few* of your Lordship's Ecclesiastical Dignity, who have nobly dared to assert the Rights of Civil and Religious Liberty, and thought no action foreign or unsuitable to their *holy profession*, which could advance the interests of mankind—the Bishops of the see of *Derry* have been the most distinguished; and your Lordship, though last, not least, among that *sacred band*.

If I had, therefore, no private favours to acknowledge—no personal esteem or regard to testify, which no one knows to value more highly, or can hold more dear than myself—I should still look up

to you as the ablest advocate for that liberty I have claimed, and solicit the sanction of your name to patronize these Discourses.

The purpose for which they were written, will justify this choice.

To dispel from Christianity that dark cloud of *mystery*, which has been so long hanging over it, and to exhibit it in its native dress, in which we see it in the Scriptures, and thus to recommend it to its votaries, and attach them to its service, was the design of this publication.

To effect this, I have exercised the right of private judgment in my interpretations of the Scriptures, neither presuming to be infallible myself, nor acknowledging that claim in others. I have thus endeavoured to place our Religion upon its only firm and immoveable basis—the Word of God explained by every individual for himself.

Could we once be brought to think, that the worst *Heresy* is a bad life—that no *Church* can be in *Danger*, which has no corruptions in it—that the only *Atonement* for our sins. is Repentance and Amendment—that the *Faith* we ought to contend for is, “*That which was once delivered to the Saints.*” Could we but agree about these *fundamental* parts of our religion, it would matter little, how much we disagreed about the rest. Were those barriers beaten down, which have been kept up, to create distinctions

## D E D I C A T I O N.

vii

tions, and kindle animosities, and a *unity of practice* sought for, which *may* be had—instead of a *unity of opinion*, which *cannot* be obtained, we might be held together by the only bond that can be lasting, and known by the only mark of distinction that is worth preserving, it being the true *Christian* one—our *love* and good-will towards each other.

The happy effects of this Christian temper, have been widely spread throughout your Lordship's diocese. That liberality of mind and equal regard which you have always shewn to good men of all denominations, has helped to unite the most discordant sects—to soften the rancour which Prejudice and Bigotry had fostered—and as far as it was necessary for every good purpose of society, melted down into a general union, those jarring and dissonant opinions; and made all conspire to promote the happiness of each other; the distinguishing appellations of Catholic, Presbyterian, and Churchman, have all been sunk into the common name of *Christian*. And the only struggle that now subsists between them is, which should give the greatest proofs of their zeal, and their affection to their common Friend and Patron.

And is it to be wondered at, that such peace and unanimity should now prevail in a city, once the seat of party rage and religious hatred? The citizens alike perceiving, that your differing from  
any



any individual in opinion, produced in you no diminution of personal regard for *him*, caught the same liberality of spirit, and were actuated by the same sentiments towards each other. Thus when your Lordship nobly proposed to erect a Chapel for the Roman Catholics of Derry, there was not a Churchman or Sectary, who did not eagerly adopt your *truly* Catholic principle, and contend for the honour of laying the first stone of that edifice\*. The *Establishment*, in particular, saw no *Danger* to themselves

\* What satisfaction it must have afforded to a liberal mind, to have seen the Bishop of the Diocese, with the Titular Bishop, joined by the Mayor of the Corporation, the Dean of the Cathedral, and the Two Dissenting Ministers, all going in procession to lay the first stone of the Popish Chapel; which is now completed, and affords an example that does honour to the Prelate, and to the citizens that followed it. Blush, ye zealots and bigots, and learn for once a lesson of good-will and Christian charity, from those ye have been taught to hate and to despise.—We have had our procession too in this country, (or rather our AUTO DA FE); but it has been of a far different kind from that above-mentioned. It was not indeed PERSONALLY ATTENDED by *Bishops* and *Magistrates*, nor was it set on foot with the design of *laying the first stone of any place of worship*; but with the opposite intention of *not leaving one stone upon another* in any religious

selves from performing the offices of friendship and humanity towards the members of a different Communion; nor did they pollute the name of their *Church*, to sanctify Oppression, Violence, and Wrong.

——pudet hæc opprobria nobis

Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.

Your own liberal example, my Lord, has conspired with the wisdom of the Legislature, which has had no occasion to regret the concession of a full enjoyment of religious rights to the Dissenters of Ireland; as it has found, that the obligation to the discharge of civil duties, has not been lessened, but increased, by such a grant. And let us hope, that the time is coming, when this wise policy will be adopted by every Legislature;—when not only the Protestant Dissenters, but every other class of Christians, will enjoy both their Religious and Civil Rights;—and when the State shall wisely avail itself of the abilities and integrity of every citizen—and  
when

religious structure, whose form was not exactly according to the plan laid down by the State. Such is the difference between *building* and *burning*! The one proceeding from the true Christian spirit of benevolence and good-will to all: The other, from the blind and furious rage of persecuting zeal and intolerant bigotry.

when active exertions in behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty, will be the only *Test* that remains for a free and happy people to give of their zeal for a country, which merits their attachment, by blessing every virtuous inhabitant with equal and impartial privileges.

I have the honour to be,

My LORD,

With great esteem and regard,

Your LORDSHIP'S

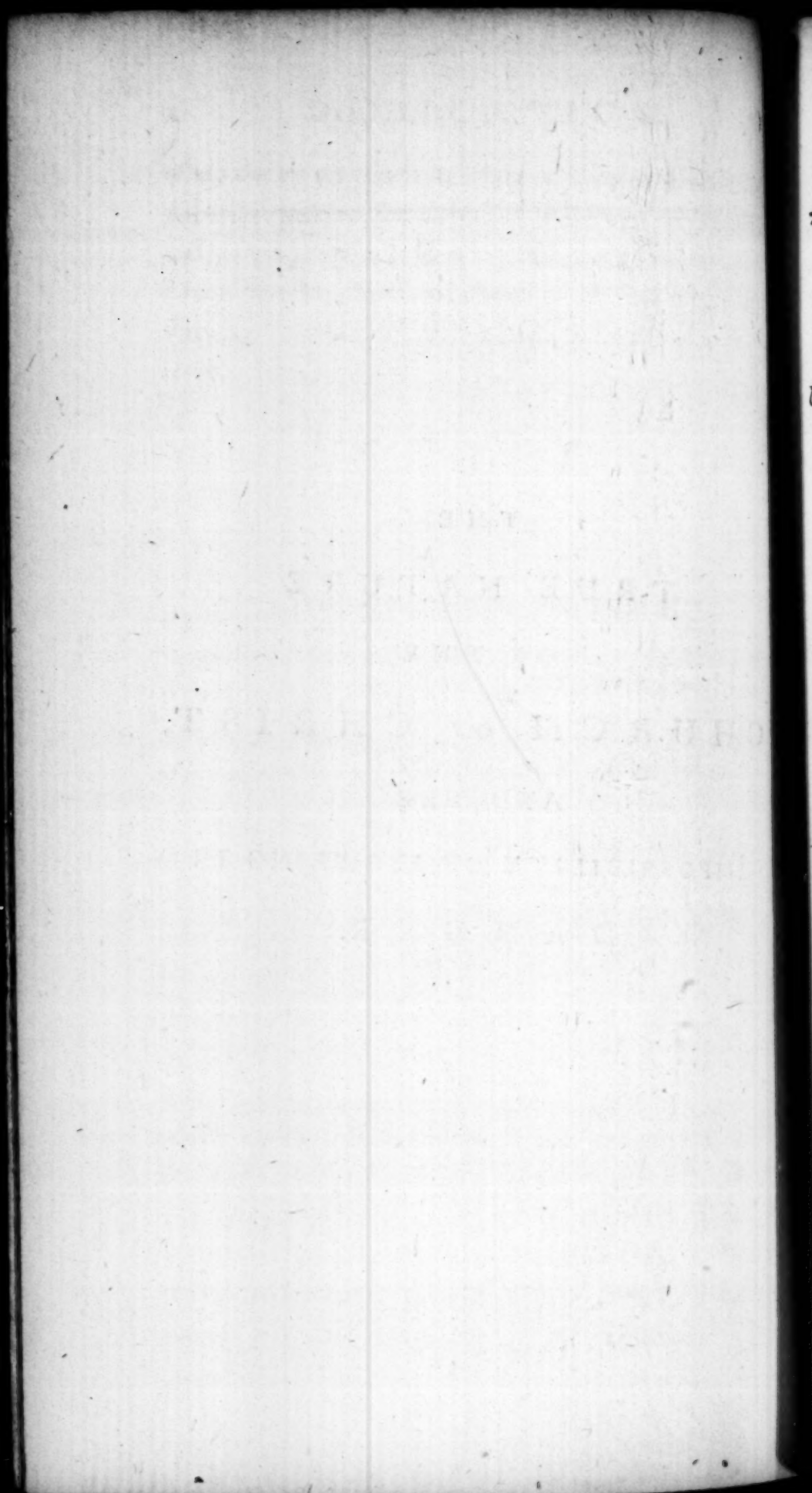
Very obliged and obedient

Humble Servant,

GEO. ROGERS.

THE  
TRUE NATURE  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST,  
AND THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING IN  
DANGER.





---

MATT. xvi. 18.

*Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

---

OUR Saviour having worked many miracles, in testimony of his divine mission, was willing to learn, whether these proofs had produced their proper effects, by leading men to conclude, that they were certain evidences of his being the Messiah. He asked his Disciples, saying, "Whom do men say, that I, the son of man, am?" He assumes no title above others; but ranks himself with the rest of mankind; with all those who were equally "the sons of men" with himself; and leaves it to them to make the distinction which marked the peculiarity of his character; that they might ascribe it to the works he had performed, and not to any thing naturally superior to others in his person. The answer they made was, "Some say, that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias; or one of the Prophets." However mistaken they were with regard to the exact person of Christ, yet every one agreed in looking upon him as a human  
B being,

being, though endued with authority, and a divine commission. He asks again, "But whom, say ye, that I am?" They had been his constant attendants, had heard his doctrines, and seen his miracles, and were qualified to give a most express answer to this question. Accordingly, Simon Peter answered, and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." *i. e.* Thou art the Messiah, the expected Prophet, that was to come into the world. His being "the Son of the living God" was peculiar to him, in this respect only, that he was highly favoured in having a divine commission given him; and deserved the title in a more eminent degree than others, on account of his exemplary virtue, and perfect obedience to the will of God; for all good men are, in Scripture, stiled "Sons of God," though in a sense inferior to that which is applied to Christ. Peter gave so just a description of the person and character of Christ, that our Lord "answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in Heaven; and I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my CHURCH, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." That is, Happy are you, that you have formed this opinion of me, and have not taken it up lightly, or from mere report, but have concluded from conviction, that I could not have done the miracles which you have seen, or taught the doctrine

doctrine you have heard, if I had not been commissioned by my heavenly Father to fill the office, and answer the character you have ascribed to me. And this I affirm to you, that the confession of faith which you have now made, and the belief of this single article, of my being the Messiah, is that fundamental truth, on which my religion shall be established; and whatever may be the attempts of its enemies, to prevent its reception in the world, it shall still spread, and finally prevail over all opposition.

This is the evident meaning of the text. But as the use of words without clear and precise ideas annexed to them, gives occasion to the grossest errors, and the most material perversion of the plainest things; and as this effect has been produced in no instance more remarkably, than in the misconception of what is really meant by the word *church*; I shall in the following discourse consider, First, the scripture meaning of that term; and shall, Secondly, shew, that according to our Saviour's declaration, no danger can possibly befall it.

First, The word "Church," in scripture, as well as in profane authors (a), invariably means an "Assembly."

B 2

sembly."

(a) Εκκλησια, amongst the Greeks, meant an Assembly, called together upon any public business, to enact laws &c. Εβουλομην μιν ειν, ω Αθηναιοι, τας Εκκλησιας υπο των εφεσηκοτων ορθως διοικησθαι. Æschines passim.—Θειν Εκκλησια, Deorum concilium, an Assembly of the Gods. Lucian.



sembly." Wherever there was a number of Christians, small or great, collected together, that meeting was called "a church;" and it took its name from the persons who assembled, not the place in which they met. Nor was it any particular order or description of persons amongst them, but the whole body assembled that constituted this "Church." A few instances will serve to prove this. "Salute Priscilla and Aquila, and the church which is in their house (b):" which means a number of persons professing Christianity, in that particular house or family, and has no manner of relation to the place itself where they were assembled; but the persons or family in it are stiled "the church." "No church communicated with me, but ye only (c)." The Apostle addresses himself to the Philippians, as "the church;" remarking the difference between their conduct towards him, and that of others. "Ye are come to the general assembly, and church of the first born (d)." These terms are synonymous, and so they are translated in two passages of the Acts. "The assembly was confused." "He dismissed the assembly (e);" which senses could not be given to the

(b) Rom. xvi. 15.

(c) Phil. iv. 15.

(d) Heb. xii. 23.

(e) Acts xix. 32. 40. ἡ ἐκκλησία συγχέχυμένη, ἀπὸ  
λυσε τῆς ἐκκλησίας.

the word *church*, supposing it to have been the *place* of meeting. "If the whole church be come together in one place (*f*);" that is, if all the christians of a certain district be assembled together. These and other instances in scripture oblige me to give this construction to the word *Εκκλησια*. The *congregation*, and not the place, forms the idea of it.

As there was no particular place appointed for these meetings, so neither were there any persons appointed to preside, with any degree of power or authority, over the rest; but a general equality prevailed amongst them. They acknowledged no other superior than Christ. He is stiled, "the Head of the Body, the Church (*g*): that is, the whole society. And to shew the perfect equality that subsisted between the members of it, they are all stiled brethren. "The Head of every man was Christ (*h*)."  
He had no other superior in religious matters.—The Apostles themselves enjoyed no power but what related to their divine mission; the power of working miracles, of prophesying, and speaking with tongues. And even these powers were imparted, by the Apostles, to all christians in general, and were not confined to any particular order amongst them. Stephen (*i*), who was chosen by the congregation to the menial office of serving tables, preached,

B 3

" and

(*f*) 1 Cor. xiv. 23.(*g*) Coloss. i. 18.(*h*) 1 Cor. xi. 3.(*i*) Acts vi. 5. 8.

“ and did great wonders and miracles among the people.” The qualifications required of those who were to fill the most important offices in the church, were age, piety, and prudence; and as far as the powers of persuasion, example, and gravity could go, they might exercise them to the full: but supremacy and spiritual dominion they had none; and where the interests of the gospel were not immediately concerned, the Apostles and Elders had no more power than private christians. If an offence was committed by one christian against another, and the matter could not be settled privately, or by the friendly interference of one or two others, the church itself, that is, the whole assembly of christians, was consulted in the last resort (*k*). “ If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church.” If he did not submit to this decision, he was excluded the society, which was the whole of their excommunication. The rules relating to this discipline, amounted to little more than a direction not to keep bad company; and the great bond of union which held this society together, was love and charity.

This is the account we have of the church which Christ established; which, for its piety and simplicity, may well deserve our admiration. And if a comparison were drawn between *it* and modern churches, the utility and advantages it possesses,  
above

(*k*) Matt. xviii. 17.

above those human institutions ; nay, I had almost said, its direct opposition to them all, would be too conspicuous to be dissembled. There was no stress laid upon the place where christians should meet, nor any intimation given, that one sort of edifice was more proper than another to assemble in, for the worship of God ; a peculiarity, which with some people, enters very much into their idea of a true church, and of the efficacy of their prayers offered up in it. All were invited into it, without any discrimination of sect or party, gentile as well as jew. " Preach the gospel to every creature (*l*)," was the commission, and the terms were as plain : " He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." The conditions of admission into a church, at this time, are not so easy. Many things are required to be believed, which are not in the gospel, before a person is allowed to enter into it. It cannot therefore be " preached to every creature " in that unlimited degree it was ordered, as there are many who refuse to receive it, on account of those other articles of faith which have been superadded to it. There was no distinct order of men who had exclusively appropriated to themselves the denomination of the church, or what we now call the clergy. But " unto every believer was given grace, according to " the measure of the gift of Christ (*m*). " In greater degree

(*l*) Mark xvi. 15. 16.

(*m*) Ephes. iv. 7. 11. 12. 1 Cor. xii. 7. 11.



degree indeed to some than to others ; and for the sole purpose “ of perfecting the saints for the work of “ the ministry, for the edification of the body of “ Christ ;” not to be lords over the faith of others, or to exercise a spiritual supremacy. We read indeed of Elders and Bishops, or Overseers, who were to inspect the conduct of their christian converts, and who, from their age were fittest to add the force of example to the piety of their precepts. And these venerable teachers are described under the image of shepherds and guides ; offices in themselves, low and humble, but sanctified by the use they were to make of them ; which was to secure their followers from error, and lead them into the way of truth ; not to blind their eyes and shut out the light of their understandings, and then make them believe that they were in the right path. The Apostles, and first preachers, undertook a burthen, not an office of power and authority ; they were better and poorer than other people, not their lords and masters. The officers which are now supposed necessary to constitute a church, vastly exceed those of the primitive one in number, and fall as much short of them in point of utility (*n*). Nor was the discipline of the church

(*n*) In our common idea of the English church, the body of the people is hardly included. It is supposed to consist of the King, as supreme head ; of Archbishops,

church of Christ exercised with any severity. "The delivery of men over to Satan (*o*)," was by no means a consigning them to the punishment of the damned in the next world, after having tortured them to death in this. Amendment, not their destruction, was the object. It was done, that they "might learn" not "to speak ill" of religion, which was of so holy a nature, as not to admit a bad man into it. And these persons whom the Apostle speaks of, were of the most abandoned cast; apostates; men who had both sacrificed their faith and conscience, and become such a disgrace to their calling, that they were fit only to associate with the profligate and immoral; with those who were "enemies" to the gospel, and its greatest "opposers." "This delivering over to Satan," is very different from delivering over to the civil magistrate and the executioner; and if they had not "made shipwreck of a good conscience (*p*)," as well as their "faith," they would not have been treated as bad men, but as mistaken

bishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Deans, Archdeacons, Convocations, Chancellors, Treasurers, Præcentors, Prebendaries, Canons, Petty Canons, Rectors, Vicars, Curates, Chaplains, Choristers, Organists, Parish Clerks, Vergers, Sextons, &c. Vide Robertson's Attempt to explain the words Reason, Substance, &c. p. 171.

(*o*) 1 Tim. i. 19. 20.

(*p*) 1 Tim. i. 19.

taken ones. The infliction of tortures, and death, in all its hideous forms, for a want of faith, in what reason cannot comprehend, or for entertaining a doubt about the authority which imposes such a belief, was a refinement in cruelty reserved for later ages of the church. The apostles and first christians had learned a better lesson from their master, "who came not to destroy mens' lives, but to save them (q)." And this he said, when his disciples wanted him "to call down fire from heaven" to consume those *dissenters* and *heretics*, the Samaritans (r): he told them "they knew not what the true spirit of their religion was;" that it breathed nothing but love and charity, and embraced all mankind, as brethren; and that no difference of worship, or of religious opinion, ought to abate their good will, or lessen their good actions, one towards another.

Having considered the scripture meaning of the word "church," I shall secondly shew, that according to our saviour's declaration, no "danger" can possibly befall it.

Had all other churches been built with the same materials with the "church of Christ," there would never have been any complaint about their decay, or apprehensions for their fall. That Jesus was the "Christ" "the son of the living God," was the "rock upon which the church of Christ was built."

It

(q) Luke ix. 57.

(r) Luke ix. 54.

It has withstood the ravages of time, the violence of the floods, and the fury of the storms that have beaten upon it; and nothing has been able to shake it, for it was founded upon a "rock (*s*)."  
 Other churches have since been said to be constructed upon this model; but the danger they are now in, from the decayed state of them, plainly proves that they were built upon a very different foundation. The apostle tells us, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," which is "Jesus Christ." Now it is certain, an attempt has been made to lay a very different foundation, and to build upon it. Several other propositions, quite contrary to christianity, and destructive of it, are deemed its fundamental truths; but as they are neither agreeable to reason, nor the word of God, it cannot be expected they should have his power or sanction to support them. The foundation that is laid by the "apostles and prophets" will remain firm and unmoveable; but "if any man build upon this foundation, wood, hay, stubble, his work shall be made manifest; the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (*t*)."  
 Wherever the fictions of men shall be substituted for the word of God, or a motley mixture of absurd and unscriptural doctrines shall be super-added to it, it shall plainly appear "whose work it is."

(*s*) Luke vi. 48.

(*t*) 1 Cor. iii. 11. 12. 13.



is." Révelation and mystery—light and darkness, are so opposite to each other, that if men are suffered to use their reason and senses, they never can be under a mistake about them; and when once they shall exercise their faculties in the search after truth, and bring their opinions to their only test, the scriptures—then will come the fiery trial to the hay, wood, and stubble—to the whole fabric of error, which has been building for ages, and will pass away like a vision. Such an antichristian church as this, must ever be *in danger*; and no wonder that the members of it are in such constant alarms about it. If any worldly power could procure it aid, it has every security which that can give. Large revenues are allotted to its defence, and every allurements held out to those who will engage in its service. It is guarded by restrictions, fenced in by pains and penalties, and is by LAW ESTABLISHED. With all these supports, still it is *in danger*, and ever crying out for help. Sure this betrays some very great weakness within, as it is so well defended from without! Great is the power of the civil magistrate, but no power can make a proposition true, which is in itself false; or maintain, by force, the reasonableness of injudicious laws. He may silence the voice of truth, but is not able wholly to *stifle* it. He may bribe men to *profess* the grossest contradiction—but no authority can insist upon their *believing* it. Most human establishments of religion have been productive

ductive of sloth, ignorance, and hypocrisy in its professors—cramping the best faculties of the mind, and enslaving it to priestcraft and folly. The religion of Christ stands in no need of such assistance, and can support itself by its own strength, and its own evidences. It not only made its way in the world, at its first promulgation, without the aid of the civil power, but in opposition to it; and this at a time when it was preached by a few poor, friendless, and illiterate fishermen. These first preachers had no rewards to distribute, no honours to bestow; nothing to interest their followers, or retain them in their cause. On the contrary, bonds, imprisonment, and death, were their certain portion. Yet notwithstanding all these discouragements, they went forth to the conflict, with no other armour than truth, and no other comfort than a good conscience. With these, in a short time, they overcame the prejudices of the Jews, the idolatry of the Gentiles, and effected a revolution in religion, when every power in this world was combined to crush it. Could natural means have produced so sudden and so wonderful a convulsion? No; the same power that first gave rise to christianity, continued to support it. But it has met with opposition, not only from open enemies, but false friends; and the latter have done it more disservice than the former; under pretence of what they have called establishing, they have helped to undermine it, and destroy its efficacy; and in order

to improve what was already perfect, they have added such errors and corruptions, as are a scandal and disgrace to it. And as men are fonder of their own inventions than they are of truth, they have guarded these fictions with more care and jealousy, than they have the vital principles of the gospel. These unsubstantial doctrines being in danger from the weakest attack, the approach to them is diligently watched, and no less rigorous injunctions given to prevent a surprise, than were by Moses to the Israelites, to keep them from Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people, round about, saying, take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the border of it, whosoever shall touch the Mount shall be *surely put to death* (v)." Thus exposed as christianity has been to the assaults of its open enemies, and the misguided zeal of its false friends; it has still surmounted all difficulties, has even gained strength by opposition, and proved the truth of our Saviour's prediction, "that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

From what has been said, these conclusions naturally follow:

First, Before we complain of the church being *in danger*, we should consider well what church we mean. If it be the "church of Christ," our fears are vain; for we are assured by our Lord himself,

no danger shall befall it. But if we be anxious for any other church, our fears are too well founded; and there is no way to remove them, but by making it as like the former as possible, both in discipline and doctrine; and holding the same confession of faith, which was so much applauded by our Saviour; which was only this, "That Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God."

Secondly, As Christ declared, that "his kingdom was not of this world," it is impossible that "his church" can form any alliance with it. It must be a wonderful conversion, and a long time must elapse before that great prophecy will be fulfilled, "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ (x)." Hitherto there has been so little agreement between them, that as well might there be, "a concord of Christ with Belial," or truth with fable, as a junction formed betwixt them. For, so unlike is the "faith once delivered to the saints," to that which Constantine enjoined, that if any thing could have ruined christianity, it was the establishment of what passed under that name by the powers of this world. It is an insult to suppose, that divine power can stand in need of human aid.

Lastly, The truest Friends to the church, are those who would restore it to its original purity and simplicity. That "being rooted and built up in a

C 2

" holy

(x) Rev. xi. 15.



“ holy faith” they may “ present it a glorious  
 “ church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such  
 “ thing, but be holy and without blemish (y).”  
 And when this is done, and not before, it may bid  
 defiance to every enemy, and assure itself, “ that the  
 “ gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.”

To the King, eternal, immortal, invisible; the  
 only wise God, be ascribed honor and glory,  
 now and for ever.

(y) Coloff. ii. 7.

S

THE  
SCRIPTURE IDEA  
OF  
HERESY.

B

fi  
b  
g  
N  
th  
  
to  
a  
P  
t  
c

## ACTS XXIV. 14. 15. 16.

*But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.*

---

IT was the fate of christianity itself, at its first promulgation, to be branded with the name of *heresy*; and its preacher, St. Paul, was called the great *heresiarch*, “a ringleader of the *heresy* of the Nazarenes,” for so the term should be translated in the 5th, as it is in the 14th verse of this chapter.

The word *Heresy*, in the original, is in itself a term of no criminal import. It means no more than a *choice*; as when different religious opinions are proposed to the mind, it “*chuses*” and embraces those which appear most true and convincing. According to this interpretation, there can be nothing wrong,



wrong, or criminal, in heresy; it being nothing more than the exercise of the mind upon subjects which deserve most to employ it. Nor do we find, that it had an ill name given to it, in scripture, but when accompanied with vice, and when opinions were maintained, more for the purpose of justifying wickedness than the support of truth.

The Pharisees, among the Jews, were a religious sect, or heresy; and though many individuals of this profession were justly branded by our Lord, with the title of "hypocrites;" though they held the tradition of the elders, and rejected the commandments of God; yet, notwithstanding, we find an example of a virtuous character declaring himself a member of this suspicious community; and informing us, that after the strictest sect (heresy) of the Jewish religion he lived a Pharisee. (Acts xxvi. 5.) The Sadducees formed another sect, whose general tenor of practice and conversation, was nearly as reprehensible as that of the former. These heretics are frequently classed together; and the disciples of Christ are warned against the doctrine of both. But we may remark, that although the particular opinions of the Sadducees were of the most dangerous nature, and such as struck at the root of all religion, by denying the resurrection of the dead; yet our Saviour, in his reasoning with them upon this subject, only told them that they were mistaken, and that "they erred, not knowing;" that is, "not understanding the  
" scriptures,

“ scriptures, nor the power of God.” He “ denounces no woe” against them, as he frequently did against the Pharisees, for their hypocrisy; but “ reasons” with them out of the scriptures, and proves to them, the truth of what they before had denied. This instance of lenity must have proceeded from a distinction which our Lord made, between a mistake about the sense and meaning of certain passages of scripture, and a breach of the plain and positive commands of God, where there could be no mistake at all. And the treatment these heretics met with from our Lord, may serve as a lesson to bigots and persecutors. No hard names, nor ill language were given them. They were not threatened with fines, confiscations, and imprisonment, to make them retract their errors; but much likelier means were made use of; reason and argument; gentleness and good-nature. They were treated as men under a mistake, whose errors might be involuntary; and the issues, perhaps, only of unfortunate inquiry. They might deserve compassion, but not ill-usage; for where there is no crime, there certainly ought to be no punishment.

In all other places of scripture where heresy is spoken of with disgrace, it is always on account of the evil practices, and not the opinions, of those who were charged with it; in the epistle to the Galatians, (v. 20.) it is reckoned amongst the  
works

works of the flesh, " seditions, heresies (a), envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such like, and they who *do* such things, are told, " that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God." They were excluded from the kingdom of God, for the bad *actions* which they *did*, not the wrong opinions they maintained. St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 1.) foretells, " that false teachers would come, who would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." That they were not only apostates, but such as were sunk in the grossest vices, is plain from the description given of them in this chapter. The Apostle says, that many shall follow their *pernicious ways*, or lewd practices (b): and that God will punish *them* for their wicked deeds, in the same remarkable manner, as he did the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

St. Paul directs Titus (iii. 10.) " to reject a man, that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition:" and subjoins, as a reason for this proceeding,

(a) In this place it is possible the word may mean *parties in the state*, or, *in temporal matters*; as it is joined with *seditions*, or *dissentions*. τοὺς πολέμους μετὰ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν Ῥωμαίων ΑΙΡΕΣΙΝ. Polyb. apud Raphel. Gal. i. 6.

(b) Or *filthiness*; for many ancient copies, the King's MS. and that in Magdalen College, Oxford, read ἀσελγείας. Vide Hammond.

ceeding, "Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth; being condemned of himself." This is the character of an immoral member of the christian society, who, by being conscious of his having departed from the rules of it, must himself approve of the sentence passed upon him; it has plainly this meaning and no other. For the Apostle, in the verses before, had been recommending an exemplary behaviour in believers; that they should be careful to excell all others (*c*) in good works; as such a conduct would be useful and serviceable, but that foolish questions, and contentions, were unprofitable and vain; and that the heretic, whom he was to reject, was one, who was subverted, was turned out of the way (*d*), wherein he should have walked, and had sinned, and so become a disgrace to their society, and ought to be expelled from it.

Thus it appears, that heresy, according to the scripture notion, being not a pure mistake of judgment, but an embracing of doctrine known to be false by those who espouse it, out of disgust, pride, or envy, or from worldly principles, or to avoid persecution, or trouble in the flesh, may be well ranked  
among

(*c*) καλῶν ἔργων προεῖσθαι, præesse, to be at the head of good works, προεῖσθαι τῶν πραγμάτων—της ηγεμονίας. Demosth.

(*d*) Εξείραπται.



among carnal lusts. Hence, are such men said, "not to serve Jesus Christ, but their belly, (Rom. xvi. 18.) to teach what they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. i. 11.) to account gain for godliness (1 Tim. vi. 5.) and through covetousness, with feigned words, to make merchandize of others." (2 Pet. ii. 3.) And therefore the Apostle doth not advise us, to convince, but only to admonish, and reject the heretic, as knowing that he sins, being convicted by his own conscience (*e*). And where heresy is not taken up to serve bad purposes, and bad passions, and is not persisted in from a spirit of pride, strife, and contention, but from a laudable opposition to gross errors, and bad practices: there it is spoken of with commendation in the holy scriptures. St. Paul, hearing of some divisions in the church of Corinth, about the celebration of the Lord's supper, writes to them to prevent the irregularities of behaviour which had taken place there; and tells them, that those who had a proper sense of their duty, and that sacred ordinance, should withdraw themselves from such as had not: that by thus forming themselves into a select and separate body, they might observe such order and decency, as would be rendered conspicuous to all the rest: that singularity in a good cause was a virtue, and that they ought to be proud of a distinction, when any good might be gained by it.

(*e*) See Whitby on Gal. v. 19. quoted Jebb's Works, ii. 148.

It "For there *must* be even *heresies*," says he, "amongst you, that they, which are approved," that is, men of approved virtue, and who will stand the test, "may be made manifest among you." And that this never could be done, but by forming a separation, and opposing good example to bad, in order to put a stop to the abuses complained of. Here the heretics were the best part of the congregation: not the leading party, who had behaved amiss; from whom the conscientious were ordered to divide and separate, that they might manifest their integrity.

Having examined the word "heresy," and seen in what sense it is used in scripture, we are not to wonder, that St. Paul was not at all startled at being charged with it. They had not yet begun to fulminate anathemas against those who dared to think for themselves, nor were the terrors of an inquisition held out to such obstinate offenders. This intolerance was reserved for a later age. So long as our apostle knew that the Jews could prove nothing criminal against him, and his conscience told him that he had been guilty of no offence, either against God or man, he held in contempt their accusation of being a ring-leader of the heresy of the Nazarenes; and with a spirit and courage, that truth and innocence inspires, openly declared to the Roman governors, that if to be a christian was an heretic, an heretic certainly he was; but adds, that his accusers were not aware,

D

that

that by making him one, they had in a great measure included themselves under the same predicament. "For, says he, after the way which they call *heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers." No *new object* of worship is introduced; the *same* common parent of mankind; the *same almighty Being*, to whom our nation owes such distinguished marks of favour and protection. He is equally the God of *Christians* and of Jews; and all that he requires of either is "that they should worship him, in spirit and in truth." Whatsoever is written in the law, and the prophets, is equally the object of the faith of both; and the expectation, which the Jews indulge, of a resurrection of the dead, and a future recompence of reward; the same hope is the basis of a christian's creed, and the *distinguishing* article of his religion; that in this latter instance, the difference did not respect the object but the degree of faith: for what the one only hoped for, as relying upon the goodness of God, the other was fully assured of, by his having raised up Christ from the dead.

This was St. Paul's confession of faith, which he made before the Roman governors, upon a charge of heresy brought against him by the Jews. It was thought a full and satisfactory defence by the civil power, and ought to have silenced his accusers, if piety, worth, and virtue could have expiated the offence of differing from them in opinion. It is a short formulary of faith, which the apostle has given



us; it consists of but few articles, and those very plain and intelligible; no one who maintains the doctrines contained in it, ought to be charged with heresy, according to the modern acceptation of the term; and if he is, he may shelter himself under the name and authority of St. Paul, who very frankly confessed, that what his enemies stiled heretical, he considered as the true religion. And what this is, it is well worth our remarking. First, Christianity has made no alteration in the object of divine worship. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is *one* Lord," is a truth equally insisted on by the christian as well as jewish lawgiver. Our Saviour, in answer to the scribe, says, that the *first* of all the commandments, was that which related to the *unity* of the Supreme Being; and as this was one of the first precepts of the moral law, his declaration concerning it, confirms and ratifies the truth of it; for he came not, he said, to relax their duty in this respect, but to strengthen, and give weight to their former obligations. It is on this foundation, that the apostle Paul, builds the faith of a christian: "To us, says he, there is but *one* God, the *Father*," whom, in another place, he stiles, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father* of glory." The unity, and supremacy of God, is a truth of that magnitude and importance, that the whole jewish dispensation, was framed to establish it. To imagine that another dispensation, or what indeed was only an extension of



the former, should unsettle, or undo, what was the original and grand design of it, is to ascribe weakness and uncertainty to him "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." This is a truth which falls in with our first, and natural conceptions of things: is what reason loudly proclaims, from the apparent unity of design throughout all the works of God; and is an idea, which never can be wholly shut out of the mind, till it has been debauched by metaphysical jargon, and the refinements of false philosophy. Predicting the errors of an apostate church, the prophet Daniel (*f*) informs us, that an heathen potentate (the Roman emperor) should forsake the objects of his father's worship; should adopt *a strange God*,—expressly distinguished from the God of Gods,—a God unknown to his heathen ancestors,—though as far as related to divine adoration, equally an idol with what they had before worshipped; and honour him, not in spirit and in truth, but with gold and with silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. This is adding to, or substituting another deity instead of that God who made heaven and earth, the God of Jesus and of Paul, whom alone men ought to worship, and expressly contradicts the command of both covenants.

The

(*f*) Dan. xi. 36. 38. See Commentaries and Essays published by the Society for promoting the knowledge of the Scriptures. Vol. i. p. 486.

The next truth of importance we learn from St. Paul's defence, is a belief in the holy scriptures, and that fundamental article, which is there found, a resurrection of the dead; it is to this that the law and the prophets evidently point, viz. to the coming of the Messiah, and the doctrine he should deliver. And what is it, that he principally teaches us? Why, that he has brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. It was this truth, that the apostle principally urges in his discourses. He says, "that he was commanded to preach unto the people, and to testify, that Christ was ordained of God, to be the judge of quick and dead; to whom gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive the remission of sins." And in another place, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In expectation of this great event, and preparatory to it, we are taught in the gospel, "to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

To conclude: A belief in one God;—in the truth of the holy scriptures;—and in a judgment to come, is the substance of a christian's creed. To fabricate any other doctrines, and make them of equal importance with these, is to lessen the authority, and

sufficiency of the scriptures; and to require belief to these supplementary doctrines, whether it is done by the mandate of the pope, or any other person, is to exercise a power, which no person has a right to, and which a protestant would disown and resist, referring the decision of the dispute to a higher authority, to the bible, as his only rule of faith, and if branded as a heretic for so doing, he would not deny the charge, but boldly confess, "that after the way which they called heresy, so worshipped he the God of his fathers, believing all things which are written in the holy scriptures; and that he had hope towards God, that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." And if this confession of faith did not satisfy his accusers, it would himself, provided he "always exercised himself, to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men."

To the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, God only wise: be ascribed all honour, power, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever.

MYSTERIES .

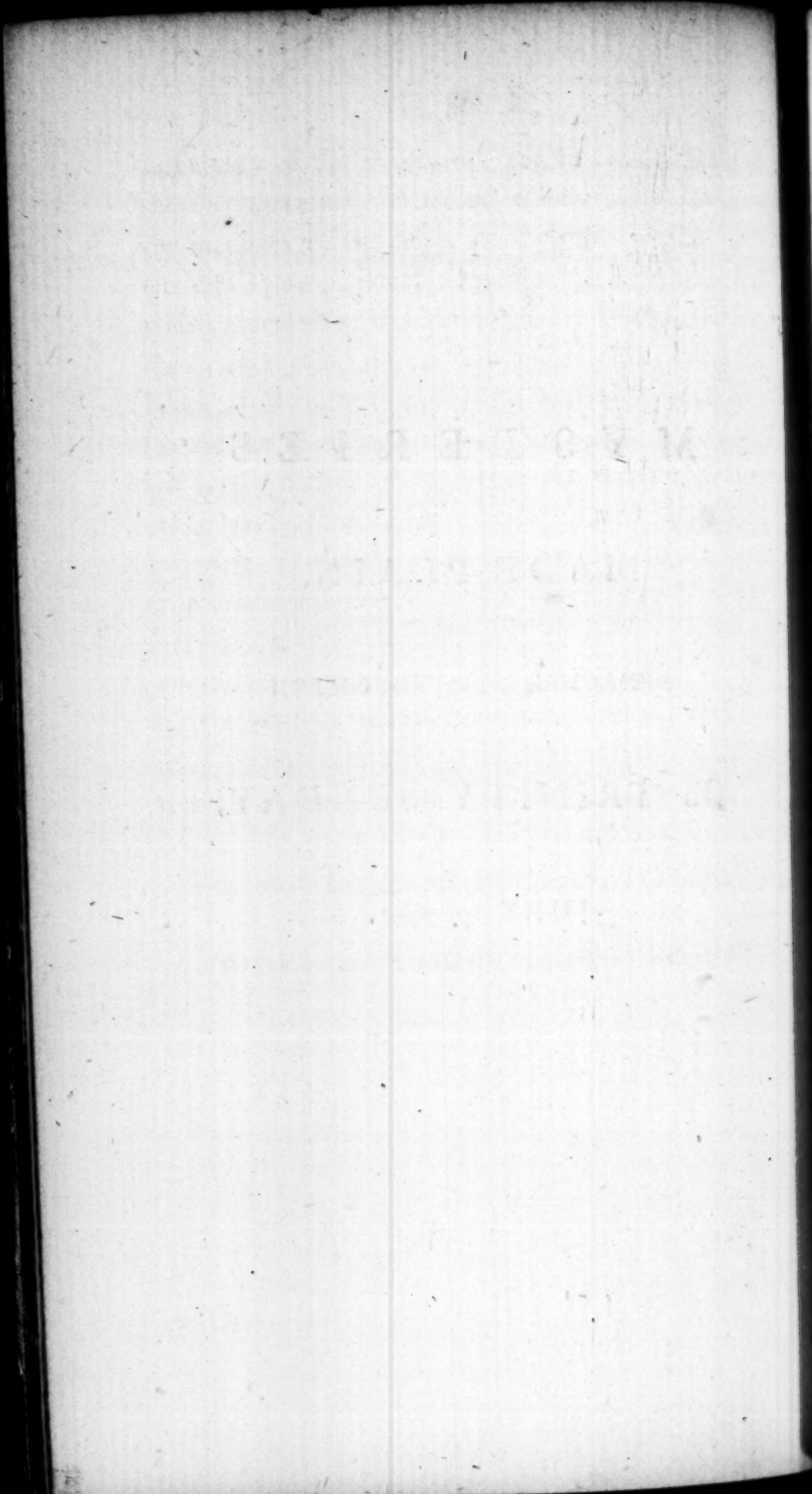
MADE PLAIN.

PREACHED AT SPROUGHTON

On TRINITY SUNDAY,

JUNE 19, 1791.





## EPHES. vi. 19, 20.

*And for me, that utterance may be given unto me,  
that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the  
Mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an Ambassador  
in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly as I ought  
to speak.*

---

IT has long been a received opinion, that there are certain *Mysteries* in the Christian religion, so far above human comprehension, that it would be in vain to enquire into their meaning; and so sacred and sublime, that it would be profane even to attempt it.

That these are very different from the mysteries which we read of in the scriptures is certain: for the latter are always spoken of as things capable of explanation, and which are all actually explained; nor do the sacred writers condemn an inquiry into their meaning, as an unlawful and unbecoming curiosity, but assert the contrary; and consider it, as the duty of a christian minister, "to make them known," and divulge them. St. Paul wanted only  
"liberty"

"liberty of speech" (a), to unfold "the mysteries of the gospel," and shew the reasonableness of it; and perhaps all that is now wanted, is the same liberty to shew the unreasonableness of all other *mysteries* which are *not* in the gospel.

I shall, in the following discourse, First, endeavour to prove, that there are *no mysteries* in the gospel but such as are revealed.

And, Secondly, that when christianity is said to be *mysterious*, the true nature of it is misrepresented.

First, In those instances where our Lord couched his meaning under figurative expressions, and intended that his disciples only should comprehend the full import of what he said, he uses the word *mystery* as synonymous to *parable*, as appears from St. Mark, and the parallel places (b). "Unto you it is given to *know* the *mystery* of the kingdom of God;" which is afterwards explained, by his saying, "*Know ye not this parable*" (c).

But in the writings of the apostles, the word is generally applied to the calling of the gentiles into the church and kingdom of God; an event which the Jews had no conception of; as they imagine that the partial favours of heaven were to be confined to their own nation; and that, from long prescription,

(a) Παρηγοια.

(b) Mark iv. 11. Matt. xiii. 11. Luke viii. 10.

(c) Mark iv. 13.

scription, they had an exclusive right to them (*d*). But this mystery or secret, which had lain *hid*, in the councils of God, the apostles "*made known*," and proclaimed to the world. A few instances will evince this.

St. Paul says (*e*), that "God had by revelation, "*made known* unto him the mystery, of which he "had written before in few words, whereby they "might understand his *knowledge* in the mystery of "Christ; which, in other ages, was not made "known unto the sons of men, as it was then revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the "spirit

(*d*) The first and leading sense of *μυστήριον*, says the learned Dr. Campbell, "is not that of the English "word *mystery*, i. e. something incomprehensible by "reason, but *arcanum*, a secret. It is adopted by the "septuagint as a term strictly corresponding with "the Chaldaic *מֵסֵתֵר* *res arcana*. Nor is it confined to "divine secrets. St. Paul tells us, that the mystery "of iniquity doth already work; i. e. the spirit of "antichrist hath begun to operate, but the operation "is latent and unperceived. The gospel of Christ "is denominated a mystery, not because it contains "any thing in its own nature dark and incomprehensible, but because it treats of something that had "been concealed for ages, but which was at length "openly revealed." Vide *Essays Philosophical, Historical, and literary*, 1st. vol. p. 431.

(*e*) Ephes. iii. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 9. 10.



“ spirit—*That the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and*  
 “ *of the same body, and partakers of his promise in*  
*Christ, by the gospel; whereof he was made a mi-*  
 “ *nister, that he should preach among the gentiles*  
 “ *the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make*  
 “ *all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery,*  
 “ *which from the beginning of the world, hath been*  
 “ *hid in God—to the intent, that now might be*  
 “ *known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of*  
 “ *God.*”

In another place (*f*), the same apostle speaks of  
 “ *this mystery, which had been hid from ages, and*  
 “ *from generations, but then was made manifest to his*  
 “ *faints; to whom God would make known what*  
 “ *are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the*  
 “ *gentiles.*”

Again, in his epistle to the Romans (*g*), he says,  
 “ I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant  
 “ of this mystery; that blindness in part is happened  
 “ to Israel, until the *fulnness of the gentiles* be come  
 “ in.” And referring to the same matter, in the  
 close of the same epistle (*h*), he speaks of “ the  
 “ mystery which was kept *secret* since the world  
 “ began, but then was made manifest, and by the  
 “ scriptures of the prophets, according to the com-  
 “ mandment of the everlasting God, made known to  
 “ *all nations, for the obedience of faith.*”

The

(*f*) Coloss. i. 26. 27.

(*g*) Rom. xi. 25.

(*h*) Rom. xvi. 25. 26.

The mysteries here spoken of were neither abstruse nor unintelligible; their *hidden* meaning was not reserved for the “*initiated*,” and withheld from the “*profane* ;”—nor were they considered as speculations proper to employ the learned, and keep the vulgar in awe. But they were plain and level to every capacity (*i*). The apostle speaks of his *own* knowledge in the *mystery of Christ*; and desires that all his brethren might be as great “*adepts*” in it as himself (*k*). They had a moral and practical use; were made known for the obedience of faith (*l*), not to exercise their faith *only*—to promote piety and virtue, not wrangling and disputation.

In all other places of scripture, when the word mystery is used, without any particular allusion to the calling of the gentiles, it signifies the power, mercy, and goodness of God, vouchsafed to the whole race of mankind; and wonderfully displayed in the dispensation of the gospel; a blessing so inconceivably great and unexpected, that it might well appear mysterious, till the whole plan of it was laid open, and fully made known.

Thus, in that passage of St. Paul (*m*), “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness;  
“ God

(*i*) Ephes. iii. 4. (*k*) Rom. xi. 25. (*l*) Ib. xvi. 25. 26.

(*m*) 1 Tim. iii. 16. But the true meaning of 1 Tim. iii. 16. is according to many old versions, and the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, *μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας*  
*μυστηριον*

God was made manifest in the flesh." It does not mean that God himself was visible in the person of Christ—this would not have been a mystery, but an impossibility: "For no man hath seen God at any time. nor *can* see him (*n*):" But it signifies, that the power, mercy, and goodness of God, which is all that we can know of him, were rendered conspicuous in the person of Christ, who was the agent and instrument of the Almighty, in his beneficent designs towards the children of men,—so that the Supreme Being might be said to be *manifested*, when he made known his will to Christ, and gave him power and authority to execute it; and is what our Lord repeatedly declares: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me (*o*)."  
 "I can, of mine own self, do nothing (*p*)."  
 Again, when speaking of the resurrection of the dead, and the great and sudden change which our bodies were to undergo, St. Paul says, "Behold I shew you a mystery:" (1 Cor. xv. 51.) i. e. I make known to you a circumstance, relating to an event, the particulars of which you before were unacquainted with.

And to put it past doubt, that all the mysteries of the gospel came within the province of reason, and  
 common

μυστηριον ο εφανερωθη εν σαρκι. That which was manifest, *o, id quod*, i. e. the mystery, that series of events disclosed by the gospel.

(*n*) John i. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 16.

(*o*) John vii. 16.

(*p*) John v. 30.

common apprehension of mankind, he supposes a case, where all of them are brought together, and yet possible to be conceived. " Though I *understand all mysteries* and all *knowledge* (q). i. e. every thing that relates to the dispensation of the gospel, and a proper ability to preach it. Here it is observable, that *mystery* and *knowledge* go hand in hand; a connection peculiar to those of the gospel,—in all others they are very wide asunder; for the *less* the *knowledge*, the *greater* the *mystery*; till the proportion being not at all kept up between them, knowledge is wholly lost and sunk in the labyrinths and abyss of mystery.

These instances adduced from the scripture will suffice to prove, that there are no *mysteries* in the gospel but such as are *revealed*. That they relate in general to the calling of the gentiles, to partake of God's mercy in the gospel. That they did not consist of abstruse and contradictory propositions, of so wonderful a nature as to confound the reason, and stagger the faith of the believer—but plain and important truths, containing an account of God's will *made known* to mankind, by the preaching of Christ and his apostles.

Which leads me, secondly, to consider, That when the gospel is said to be mysterious, the true nature of it is misrepresented.

E 2

It



It is not without good reason, that the scripture always represents it under the image of *light*—as “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (*r*).” “I am the *light* of the world (*s*),” says our Lord; “He that followeth me, shall not walk in *darkness*, but shall have the light of life (*t*).” Christians are said to be “*children of light*, and of the day (*u*);” and they are told, “to *believe* in the *light* (*x*).” What can these strong expressions mean, but that the gospel proposes so plain and clear a rule of faith, that it cannot be mistaken by those who will use the faculties which God has given them?—That it is as obvious to the reason of mankind, as light is to the eyes. Indeed, so clear is it represented, that emphatically speaking, it is styled *light itself*. And it was wisely and beneficently ordered, by the Almighty, that the gospel should be thus plain and intelligible; as it was intended for general use, and more particularly for the poor and illiterate (*y*). Any thing intricate or abstruse, would have ill-suited their capacities, who are not to be instructed by abstract propositions, but self-evident truths: It was therefore meant to serve as a clear and practical rule of life—not a standard for doubtful disputations, or  
speculative

(*r*) John i. 9. (*s*) Ib. viii. 12. (*t*) Luke xvi. 8.

(*u*) 1 Theff. v. 5. (*x*) John xii. 36.

(*y*) Matt. xi. 5. Luke iv. 18.

speculative opinions. It is for this reason that St. Paul says, "If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not—lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Vice and wickedness are enemies to all reformation—and the light shines in vain upon those who wilfully shut their eyes against its brightness. That the doctrines of it perfectly agree with this description, and are as plain as they are important, will appear from a short review of them.

The first great design, was to call men's attention to the true object of worship, and the duty which he requires of them; and it expressly teaches, "the only true God" is "the Father (*z*);" and that he is to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth (*a*)."

Mankind was almost wholly sunk in vice as well as ignorance—the gospel was therefore a summons to them "to repent (*b*)," and return to their duty, to their heavenly Father; to reclaim them from sin and wickedness—to a life of holiness and virtue; and to assure them of pardon and forgiveness, upon their conversion and amendment (*c*).

And, as an encouraging motive to perseverance in well-doing, the promise of eternal life is held forth

E 3

to

(*z*) John xvii. 1, 3.

(*a*) Ib. iv. 23.

(*b*) Mark vi. 12.

(*c*) Acts iii. 19.

to them as a reward of their obedience (*d*). This doctrine of a resurrection, and future judgment, before but obscurely known, was plainly discovered and *brought to light* by the *gospel* (*e*);” and the evidence given of it, by the resurrection of Christ, afforded the fullest assurance of the certainty of our own (*f*).

These are the *fundamental* doctrines of christianity, in which there is nothing dark or *mysterious*; nothing that revolts the common reason or sense of mankind; nothing to provoke the scoffs of the infidel, or to give offence to the rational and true believer. But can the same be said of that form of religion, which has been falsely exhibited under the name of christianity; which has involved the plainest truths in *mystery*, and instead of affording *light*, has led to more than *Egyptian darkness*; that has increased the merit of faith, in proportion to the weakness of its credibility; and requires, that men should cease to be reasonable creatures, in order to become religious ones. What a perversion of the gospel is this! to turn, what is there called a *revelation*, into an inscrutable *mystery*, and to make what is unintelligible, a criterion of the true faith! But this comes by introducing doctrines, and modes of belief, which we shall in vain look for in the scripture; and when once brought in, the advocates for them,

(*d*) John v. 29. Rom. ii. 7.

(*e*) 2 Tim. i. 10. (*f*) 2 Cor. iv. 14.

them, in order to give them greater credit, have always represented to the people, that the very being, and essence of christianity, depended upon them; when, neither the doctrines, nor the terms by which they express them, have any place in the sacred writings; but evidently came in, with the heathen philosophers, upon their conversion: who were fonder of making a shew of their learning, than of their religion. Thus, for want of acquiescing in what the Almighty has been pleased to reveal of himself and his will, christianity has appeared in such a dress, as has entirely disguised her; and an intricate, artificial theology, has been substituted for the pure and plain word of God.

Having shewn from the scripture, that there are no mysteries in the gospel but such as are revealed; and that when it is said to be mysterious, the true nature of it is misrepresented; I shall make a few reflections upon what has been said, and conclude.

First. It was St. Paul's opinion—That “to *make known* the *mysteries* of the *gospel*, was all that was necessary to gain it a reception in the world.

And if *all other mysteries* were as capable of a rational explanation, as those of the gospel, the principal objection now made against it would be removed.

He thought too—that liberty of speech, was the only means of advancing the truth; and that to discuss freely the mysteries of the gospel, was the duty of  
of



of a christian minister ; that *he* should *open his mouth boldly*, and explain them all ; which was as much as to say, that there were none in it, or at least none that did not admit of the plainest interpretation,—a declaration which no one should be afraid of making, though the same fate awaited him that did the apostle, and he should *be in bonds* likewise. It is superstition only that wants the support of penal laws. Truth is ever a gainer by discussion and free enquiry.

Secondly. Those who maintain, that the most sacred and fundamental parts of christianity are *mysterious* and *incomprehensible*, cannot help acknowledging, that where these characters are found, there the essentials are preserved, which constitute the idea of a *true church*. Thus the church of Rome itself, with all her corruptions, is intitled to this appellation, and with great justice too, as *she* had a prior right to them, by having had the merit of introducing them before others did. But instead of priding themselves upon these distinctions—they would all do well to consider, whether, instead of their being marks of a *true church*, they are not the specific tokens of an *antichristian one*. The prophet has given the leading feature in his description of her, which is so prominent, that it cannot be mistaken: “ Upon her forehead was a name written, “ *mystery*; Babylon the great—the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.” It was the foremost character in the list that led the way for all the other corruptions ; and indeed

indeed what else can be expected from so great a perversion of the human intellect, as to confound the ideas of the plainest things, and deface that reason, the image of God, with which both his word, and his works, are all of them stamped.

Lastly. If unbelievers are ever to be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth; it must be by proposing it in that plainness and simplicity, with which we see it taught in the sacred writings. It has been the insisting upon irrational doctrines, and unscriptural modes of faith, as *necessary* to *salvation*, which has produced that infidelity we so often hear complained of. For the representing, as the word of God, what appears to be unworthy of its divine author, is the only way to make the truth itself rejected, on account of the corruptions which are said to be a part of it.

Whatever therefore renders religion more rational, renders it more credible—and an appeal to the reason and understanding of mankind, for the truth, excellence, and purity of the gospel precepts, would do more towards recommending them to their belief and practice—than all the creeds and articles that ever were devised—not to convince, but to puzzle and perplex them.



THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
ATONEMENT.



7

R

i

c

g

t

e

L

s

n

t

i

b

f

f

f

s

## 1 TIM. ii. 6.

*Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

---

TO form just conceptions of the Supreme Being, and his moral perfections, is of the greatest importance to our religious conduct. When he is considered as the original cause and author of all good, he becomes the sole object of our love, adoration, and praise; and we have every motive that can encourage us in the performance of our duty to him. But, if we divest him of the attributes of mercy and goodness, and consider him as partial in his favour, rigid in his decrees, and implacable in his nature—then fear takes place of love, and religion degenerates into superstition.

Under such impressions as these, many are led to believe, that the Deity could not have been rendered *propitious* to his sinful creatures, without the interference of some other being of equal dignity with himself, who gave full satisfaction to offended justice, and thus made way for mercy and forgiveness. And

it has been thought, that Christ was that person, who, by interposing, stayed the wrath of heaven, and averted the impending punishment; and that he did this by becoming a *sacrifice*, and suffering in *their room*,—that by his death, he might *expiate* their offences, and pay the price of that *ransom*, which alone could *redeem* them from sin and misery.

These misapprehensions and unworthy notions of the Supreme Being, proceed from attending to the sound, rather than the sense, of scripture; and adhering to a literal meaning, where the writer intended a figurative one should be understood. But the words preceding the text, will admit of no misconstruction, and inform us, that *God himself* is the prime and original author of our salvation; and is therefore emphatically stiled *our Saviour (a)*; who, from no other consideration, but his own sole mercy and goodness, was desirous (*b*), “that *all men* should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth;” and, that the “*one God (c)*” and Father of all, appointed “*the man Christ Jesus (d)*” as the medium through whom his merciful designs were to be conveyed, and “his will (*e*)” made known to the sons of men; which “mediator,” and instrument, after having *devoted* his life to the service of God,  
and

(a) 1 Tim. ii. 3.

(b) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

(c) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(d) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(e) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

and the good of mankind, closed the last scene of it, by sealing the truth of his divine mission with his blood. By thus dying in the cause of truth and virtue, he left a (*f*) *testimony to his own times*, which afforded the fullest conviction of it; according to the figurative language of the text, "He gave himself a ransom (*g*) for all, to be testified in due time." That is, his death was a confirmation of that gospel, the doctrines of which, if obeyed, would *free* and *set at liberty*, all those who were under the power and influence of *sin*, and restore them to the favour of God.

In the following discourse I shall, *First*, Endeavour to prove, That all our spiritual blessings in the gospel are derived from the sole goodness, mercy, and favour of *God*, as the original cause and author of them. And,

*Secondly*, That those terms in scripture, which seem to imply the contrary, were well understood by the *Jews*, to whom alone they were addressed; and as such, that they do not apply to *us*, unless we in-

F 2

terpret

(*f*) μαρτυριον καιροis ιδιοis.

(*g*) λυτρον, αντιλυτρον, απολυτρωσις, words of similar import, and signifying *freedom* or *deliverance*; and is so translated, Heb. xi. 35. λυτροομαι—to *make free*, or *set at liberty*. Luke xxiv. 21. ημεις δε ηλπιζομεν οτι αυτος ισιν, ο μελλων λυτρουσθαι τον Ισραηλ, made them free, or set them at liberty from the Roman yoke.



terpret their meaning in the same figurative manner they did.

*First*, That it is from God alone that we derive every blessing we enjoy, is a dictate of nature as well as revelation. The *works* of God universally proclaim this truth, and his *word* is in perfect harmony with it.

The characters, under which the Almighty is constantly described in the Old Testament, are those of a Being merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and *abundant in goodness* and truth (*b*).

The same are recorded in the New, though in more exalted strains. St. Paul (*i*) “magnifies the *goodness* of God, who is rich in mercy, through his great love, wherewith he loved us;” and says, “the kindness and love of God our *Saviour towards man*, appeared” in this respect, most conspicuous, that it was not procured by our *righteous works*, but according to *his own mercy*, *He hath saved us* (*k*). But St. John, not content with this description, as falling short of his idea of the divine benignity, styles him *love itself* (*l*); and says, “that it was manifested in this instance by sending his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him (*m*).”

Such clear and undisputed passages of scripture, sufficiently establish these important truths, “That  
God

(*b*) Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7.

(*i*) Eph. ii. 4.

(*k*) Tit. iii. 4. 5.

(*l*) 1 John iv. 8.

(*m*) 1 John iv. 9.

God is essentially, and in his own nature *good*.”  
 “ That it is from his *own great love towards mankind* ( *n* ), that all the blessings of the gospel are derived.” “ It was *his own mercy*, and no other that hath *saved us*.” It was the *love of God* that was manifested, by *sending* Christ into the world, that we might obtain eternal life ( *o* ) through his instructions ; who “ came not to do his own will ( *p* ), or to act by his own authority, but his who sent him.” He had no share in the design, but was God’s agent and instrument in the execution of it. “ He came not *of himself*, but *he sent him* ( *q* ).” He acknowledges too, that the character of *goodness*, in the most unlimited sense, was appropriate to *God* only, in exclusion of himself, and all other beings ; “ Why callest thou *me* good, says he, there is none good but *one*, that is *God*.” He could not have expressed himself thus, had he been conscious that it was through any *merit* of his own, that the blessings of the gospel had been procured ; and that without such exertion, they could never have been obtained. The mercy of God, which is his goodness to sinners, would not have been so commended, if, without his

F 3

*interference*( *n* ) φιλανθρωπια. Tim. iii. 4.( *o* ) δι’ αὐτοῦ—by his Ministry. See Acts ii. 22,—not δι’ αὐτον, *for his sake, on his account*.( *p* ) John v. 30. 43.( *q* ) Ibid. viii. 42.

*interference*, justice must have taken its natural course, and mankind for ever have been the melancholy victims of it. If such a doctrine as this had been true, he would never have told us, that we should “love the Lord our God, with *all our heart*, with all our soul, and with all our strength (r).” because in this case, an equal, if not a larger portion of our affection would have been due to *himself*.

These declarations of Christ and his Apostles, incontestibly prove, that God is the author of all good; and that our *salvation* in the gospel ought to be ascribed to him, as the prime and original cause of it.

I shall, *Secondly*, endeavour to shew, that those terms in scripture, which seem to imply the contrary, were well understood by the Jews, to whom alone they were addressed; and as such, that they do not apply to us, unless we interpret their meaning in the same figurative manner they did.

The blessings which mankind have received through the ministry of Christ, in the gospel, are often expressed in such terms as *seem* to imply, that the means which he used, were of so prevailing an efficacy, that without them the favour of God could never have been obtained.

Thus he is said “to give his life a *ransom* for many (s);” “to give himself *for* us, that he might

(r) Mark xii. 30.

(s) Ib. x. 45.

might *redeem* us from all iniquity (*t*).” And christians are said to be “ *redeemed* with the precious blood of Christ (*v*),” “ to be *bought* with a price (*w*),” “ to be *purchased* to God by his blood (*x*).”

A manifest reason may be assigned for the use of such expressions as these. It is language borrowed from the Jewish scriptures. The privileges, honours, and distinctions, which the Jews were favoured with, under their dispensation, were all expressed by these terms. And if it be considered that the gospel was first preached to Jews, it is easy to imagine, that the ministers of it would, in order to recommend it, adopt such language as was not only familiar to them, but use the very terms by which they expressed those privileges they so highly valued; that by contrasting the advantages of christianity, with the law of Moses, they might more readily embrace the offer they had to make them.

Thus, the Jews being frequently described as a people who were *ransomed* (*y*), *redeemed* (*z*), *bought*, *purchased*,

(*t*) Tit. ii. 14.

(*v*) 1 Pet. i. 17. 18. 19.

(*w*) 1 Cor. vi. 4.

(*x*) Rev. v. 9.

(*y*) Isaiah xxiii. 3. I gave Egypt for thy *ransom*, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

(*z*) Exod. vi. 6. I will *redeem* you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments : λυτρωσομαι υμας, ἢ ἐραχίονι ὑψηλῷ, καὶ κρίσει μεγάλῃ, the word used by Luke xxiv. 21.



*purchased*, and *saved*, the same terms are used as equally applicable to christians.

But it is not to be imagined that the Jews understood them in a *literal* sense, viz. that any *price* was actually paid for their *ransom*, *deliverance*, or *purchase*. Nor had they any idea that there was any other agent concerned in the business, besides the Almighty himself.

*Buying* is used metaphorically in scripture, and the prophet Isaiah explains its meaning, by applying it to that attention which ought to be paid to his instructions ( *a* ).

In this sense, we *buy*, when we seriously apply our minds to study, and receive the precepts of divine wisdom. We are exhorted by Solomon to *buy the truth* ( *b* ). Thus the most high God is also said to *buy*, with respect to his creatures. He *buyeth* a people when he interposes in their favour, and employs all proper means to *free* them from sufferings, or any other circumstances of wretchedness, and to raise them to a happy and prosperous state. So he *purchased* or *bought* the children of Israel, by bringing them out of the slavery of Egypt, to the liberty and privileges of Canaan, by his mighty power, wisdom, and goodness; which may be considered as the *price*, improperly so called, for which he *bought* them ( *c* ).

That

( *a* ) Isai. lv. i. 3.

( *b* ) Prov. xxiii. 23.

( *c* ) See Taylor's Key to the Epistles.

That these terms were not meant to be taken in a *literal* sense, is plain from what St. Peter says to the jewish converts (*d*), “ forasmuch as ye know ye  
 “ were not *redeemed* (set at liberty, or made free from  
 “ sin) with corruptible things, as silver or gold  
 “ (i.e. there was a price *paid* to *purchase* your re-  
 “ *demption*, or deliverance from sin), but with the  
 “ precious blood of Christ:” which, simply considered, as a mere fluid, could have no more value than those *corruptible things* he had before mentioned. But when meant to denote the death of Christ, it had real worth; as *that* was the highest confirmation of the truth of the gospel; which was the charter that freed men from sin, and enjoined them the practice of righteousness; and when connected with his resurrection, was an additional motive and argument for their diligently considering and faithfully regarding that gospel which he preached. In this view of it, it is with great propriety they are said to be redeemed by his blood or death. What confirms this sense of the word *redemption* is this: the Apostle says, it came from the *appointment* of God, and was intended to produce a belief in *him*, and dependance upon his promises in the gospel—of whose design and counsel Christ was made the agent and minister (*e*); “ who verily was *fore-ordained* before the foundation  
 “ of the world, but was manifest in these last times,  
 “ for

(*d*) 1 Pet. i. 18. 22.

(*e*) Ibid. i. 20. 21.

“ for you who, *by him*, do believe in God, that  
 “ raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory,  
 “ solely for this purpose, *that your faith and hope*  
 “ might be *in God*,” and no other.

The blood of Christ, therefore, may be considered as *precious*, and christians to be *redeemed* by it. But the Apostle, by directing their faith and hopes to God, the original author of their redemption, sets aside every other dependance, as being only the means used to effect it, and not the cause of it: For, had there been any real *merit* in the blood of Christ, simply considered, the benefit of which christians might have applied to themselves, any actual *satisfaction* made by it, to the justice of God, for the sins of mankind, or any *purchase* literally paid for their *redemption*, the Apostle would have drawn a very different conclusion—and would have led those “ *who believed in God*,” not “ to place their *faith and hope in Him*,” which is the natural consequence of such a *belief*, but to have reposed it all in Christ; a doctrine totally opposite to what he has advanced. What has been said of *ransom*, *redemption*, and *purchase*, is equally applicable to the terms *sacrifice* and *atonement*.

The use of them was familiar to the Jews, and applied by the apostles to the converts of that nation. But they were not understood by them in the strictly literal sense which is now affixed to them, viz. as expiations for any breach of the moral law.

Sacrifices

Sacrifices were effectual only in removing *legal defilements*, and in qualifying the worshipper to appear before God in the temple. By this offering he became *purified*; he effected a temporary reconciliation with God, and was so far restored to his favour as to be admitted into his presence, to offer up his prayers there. But, as St. Paul says, "They could not make him that did the service, perfect, as pertaining to the conscience (*f*)."<sup>1</sup> This sort of purification, is translated by *making atonement* (*g*), in a sense widely different from what we use it, and is to be met with but once in the New Testament (*b*): and should there have been rendered *reconciliation*, as the Greek word is in other places. If sin and guilt could have been literally expiated for, it would not have been required of the Jews "to make an atonement for the altar" as well as for those who were to make their oblations upon it.

As under the law, there was no proper atonement for sin, it is not likely that the Apostles, when speaking to Jewish converts, should use these sacrificial terms in a stricter sense, than they had been before.

But

(*f*) Heb. ix. 9.

(*g*) Exod. xxix. 36. Καὶ τὸ μυσχαριὲν τὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ποιήσεις τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ, καὶ καθάρις τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ σε ἐπ' αὐτό, καὶ χρίσεις αὐτό, ὡς ἀγιασάαι αὐτό.

(*b*) Rom. v. 11.



But knowing their attachment to these rites, it is highly probable that they should apply them in a better, though a figurative sense, to the truths of the gospel.

Thus it is said, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where there is a perpetual allusion to Jewish customs (i), “ that almost all things are by the law  
 “ *purged with blood*, and without shedding of blood  
 “ there is no remission ; it was therefore necessary,  
 “ that the patterns of things in the heavens, should  
 “ be purified with these, but the heavenly things  
 “ themselves with better sacrifices than these. For,  
 “ in the end of the dispensations, Christ hath ap-  
 “ peared to *put away sin*, by the *sacrifice of himself*.”

This language would have been perfectly unintelligible to any other than Jews, but to them it denoted the superiority of the gospel above the law, which was the professed design of the whole Epistle. Not that they understood any part of it in a literal sense, as if Christ was *to put away their sins*, without their forsaking them. Very far from it, the true nature of this *sacrifice* is explained a few verses before, where (k) “ the *blood* of Christ is said to *purge* their *conscience* from dead works, *to serve* the living God.” All the efficacy of it was in promoting an entire reformation of life and manners, as a previous qualification to their becoming *the true worshippers of the living*

(i) Heb. ix. 22. 27.

(k) Ibid. ix. 14.

*living God.* The whole life indeed of Christ, and every act of it, was an entire oblation to God—to serve the best interests of mankind in this and another world, he became a *sacrifice*, he *devoted* himself wholly to the cause of truth and virtue—it was a life of obedience to the will of God, and to comply with that will, and not his *own* (l), “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (m).”

The principle which actuated him, in his regard to mankind, ought to influence *us*, if occasion should call it forth. “Hereby perceive we love, “because he laid down his life for us, and we ought “to lay down our lives for the brethren (n).” *We* may copy his bright example—be imitators of his love, and make an offering on the altar of friendship (o). But in no sense can either he, or ourselves, be said to have been *real sacrifices* to it.

What confirms the interpretation here given of the several passages on which the doctrine of *atonement* is built, is this—That the terms which seem to favour it, are all borrowed from the *jewish* scriptures—are applied to remove *jewish* prejudices, and accommodate a new doctrine to old conceptions: that, on this account, they are used only in epistles, addressed to converts of that nation—that where the plain principles of christianity are taught, no notice is taken

(l) Luke xxii. 42.

(m) Phil. ii. 8.

(n) 1 Ep. John iii. 16.

(o) John xv. 13.

taken of them, of which there remains a strong proof, that there is only one passage (*p*) in the history of the apostles preaching, where mention is made of them; and as that is to the *elders and overseers* of the church, who were probably *jewish* converts, it admits of the same general solution with the first: from which it follows, that those *phrases*, however applicable they might be to the Jews, have no relation at all to us, unless we understand them in the same figurative sense they did.

I shall make a few brief remarks upon what has been said, and conclude.

First, Great as the benefits are which we derive through the mediation of Christ—highly as we may think, and we cannot think too highly, of his perfect character and complete example, yet all this must be ultimately referred to the glory of *God the Father*, whose messenger he was, and whose gracious designs he came to execute; on which account God, and not Christ, must ever be considered as the original author of our salvation.

Secondly, As christianity is a scheme to promote piety and virtue, we must be aware of any doctrine that would relax the principles of morality; and teach us to rely upon the merit and good actions of another, for that reward which we shall be entitled to, only for our own personal obedience.

Lastly,

Lastly, In our interpretation of scripture, that axiom cannot be too strictly adhered to, of explaining such passages as are abstruse and difficult, by those which are clear and cannot be mistaken—and, we should remember, that whatever contradicts our first and genuine notions of the moral perfections of God, is a construction that ought not to be admitted, and consequently, that the punishing the innocent for the crimes of the guilty, or the rewarding the wicked for the righteousness of the just, is such a violation of equity, as can be no part of his moral dispensations.





T H E

PLACE, OBJECT, AND NATURE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP  
CONSIDERED.

PREACHED AT THE

ARCHDEACON'S VISITATION,

APRIL 23, 1790,

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

ST. MARY AT-TOWER, IPSWICH.

(Published at the Request of some of the Clergy present.)

SECOND EDITION.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD

AND THE

ARCHDIOCESE OF VISITATION

OF THE

DIocese of the Holy Spirit

ST. MARY AT TOWER, NEW YORK

(Established by the Bishop of the Diocese of the Holy Spirit)

NEW YORK

## ST. JOHN iv. 23.

*The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.*

---

THE subject of conversation between our Lord and the woman of Samaria, turned upon these points ; namely—" Where the place of worship ought to be—who the proper object of it was—and in what manner He is to be known, and ought to be worshipped." Upon these topics I propose to enlarge in the following discourse.

I. The woman, as soon as she found the person she was talking with was a Prophet, puts a question to him, relating to the place of worship. " Our Fathers," says she, " worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." She does not plead the command of God to justify this custom, but merely ancient usage, and the right of prescription—" Her fathers worshipped there ;" and that circumstance was a rule to them sufficient to supersede all other.

The



The Samaritans did not want means of information in this particular. One of the priests, who had been carried away from Samaria, was sent to dwell amongst them, purposely to teach them, "How they should fear the Lord." From him they must have learned that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. But when a people have been long attached to superstitious rites and ceremonies, custom and prejudice have more force than truth and reason; and the circumstance of "their fathers having worshipped in that mountain," had power to prevail even over divine authority.

The reply which our Lord makes to her, is "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in the mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." She who had been used to think that there was something sacred in particular places, and that prayers offered up in them had a particular efficacy, is here told, that even the Temple service at Jerusalem would soon cease, and that the worship of "the Father" would be confined neither to that place nor to the mountain in Samaria; but in whatever part of the world there were true worshippers, the Father would condescend to be adored. The earth is the Lord's, and all that dwell therein. No spot so solitary and concealed, but that a private worshipper might thence acceptably pray to, and praise his Creator, if his mind were in a proper frame. The disposition of his heart would sanctify his

his devotions, and not the place in which he offered them.

II. If the Samaritans were very zealous about the place from whence they were to prefer their prayers, they were at the same time equally ignorant of the Being, to whom they ought to address them. "Ye worship," says our Lord, "ye know not what." They were not entirely without a knowledge of God; nor did they wholly neglect his worship; but they associated other deities with him, and suffered them to share in their adorations. This appears in their history. "Then one of the priests came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. Howbeit, every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places, which the Samaritans had made: so they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence (a). This species of idolatry is expressly forbidden in the scripture. "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (b)." And what rendered this practice most culpable in them, was, that they neither followed the light of nature, nor the instructions of the priest, who had been sent to teach them. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God," but divided their duty between Him and other beings, which their  
ancestors

(a) 2 Kings xvii. 28.

(b) Isa. xlii. 8.

ancestors had deified, and thus fell into the most senseless idolatry.

Such must be ever the case : for when once that primary idea, of One Almighty Father of the Universe, is given up, there is nothing so absurd and shocking which ignorance and folly may not adopt. How cautious then ought men to be, in admitting sentiments at all derogatory from the peerless majesty of Jehovah, as they never fail to lead them into the wildest errors, and inconceivable superstition. And what renders this still more necessary, is, that corruptions in religion are more difficult to remove than any other. An error in worship, however palpable and absurd, and by whatever means it creeps in, is often retained for no other reason, but because it is there already. So much greater veneration is always paid to antiquity, than to truth ! This was exactly the case with the Samaritans ; for we read, “ that  
 “ they feared the Lord, and served their graven  
 “ images, both their children, and their childrens  
 “ children ; as did their fathers, so do they, unto  
 “ this day.”

But this ignorance and uncertainty was not to be found amongst the Jews. God had manifested himself to them by the most wonderful evidence of his power, wisdom, and goodness. These divine attributes were all exerted, to give them a clear and perfect knowledge of their duty to Him. “ He  
 “ showed his ways unto Moses, his works unto  
 “ the

“ the children of Israel.” And we repeatedly read, what was intended by this display of the attributes of God; that they might impress a devout and lasting idea of his unity and supremacy; “ that they might “ know that the Lord he is God, and that there is “ none else beside him.”

We find our Lord also, during the whole of his ministry, adhering to this fundamental principle of his national religion. His repeated and fervent acts of prayer are recorded in scripture, and the object to whom he preferred it, is most clearly ascertained. He has left us not only his own example for our imitation, but a most comprehensive form of words for our use and direction. The great being, to whom He offered these addresses, was one, and the same. He never varied from the object, nor taught his countrymen to adore any other than HIM, to whom they had been accustomed. When he poured forth praises and thanksgivings, they were uttered in this strain, “ I thank Thee, *O Father*, Lord of “ Heaven and Earth, that Thou hast hid these “ things from the wise and the prudent, and hast “ revealed them into babes.” When he meant to express his submission to the divine will, and his readiness to fulfill the purposes of his mission, he made use of these words: “ *O my Father*, if this cup “ may not pass away from me, except I drink it, “ thy will be done.” Agreeably to his own practice, He taught his disciples, “ Pray to *thy Father*, “ which



“ which is in secret, and *thy Father*, who seeth in  
 “ secret, shall reward thee openly. Use not vain  
 “ repetitions, for *your Father* knoweth what things  
 “ ye have need of before ye ask him.” The apostles  
 followed his example, and taught the same doctrine.  
 “ For this,” says St. Paul, “ I bow my knees unto  
 “ *the Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ; giving  
 “ thanks always for all things to God, even the  
 “ *Father (c).*” And, that both our Saviour and  
 his Apostles looked up for succour, to One and  
 the same Almighty Being—the great parent of the  
 Universe, the Father of mankind—appears from  
 these words of our Lord, “ Go to my brethren,  
 “ and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and  
 “ your Father, and to my God, and to your  
 “ God (*d*).” The same truth the apostle Paul as-  
 serts to his heathen converts:—“ Though there be  
 “ a multiplicity of deities, and imaginary beings,  
 “ that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in  
 “ earth; to us Christians, there is but One God---  
 “ the Father---of whom are all things, and we by  
 “ him (*e*).”

The bare recital of these texts, is sufficient to  
 establish their meaning. That they should ever  
 have been mistaken or misapplied, is the wonder.  
 For they are no less agreeable to the natural notions  
 of

(*c*) Ephes. iii. 14. 20.

(*d*) John xx. 17.

(*e*) 1 Cor. viii. 5. 6.

of the Deity, than they are to the whole tenor and design of scripture. Yet still, as was the case in St. Paul's time, "There is not in every man this knowledge;" but there might be, if the scripture were the universal rule of faith. This is a plain and easy directory; all other guides, are not only fallible, but more apt to mislead and bewilder, than to give any intelligible information. The bare terms, in which some of them couch their knowledge, are often more abstruse and difficult to be comprehended, than the subject of which they treat. The end too proposed, between these different ways of instruction, is very apparent. The one---"is profitable for doctrine; for reproof; for correction; for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect; thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The other is totally unprofitable; being taken up in barren speculations, which perplex the understanding, without any moral improvement, without planting one virtue in the heart. The surest way, therefore, in our religious concerns, is to adhere to the words of scripture, in every particular; by so doing, we shall become the "true worshippers, who know what we worship; and who worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship *Him*."

We are naturally led to consider, thirdly---the manner in which the Divine Being is to be known, and ought to be adored. Such a revelation of Him-

self and his will, as the Almighty granted to the Jews, had not been vouchsafed to other nations, "He had not dealt so with them, neither had the Heathen such knowlege of his laws." Our Saviour might well affirm to the woman of Samaria, we know what we worship, for salvation is "of the Jews." But we are not here to imagine, that the Jews knew more about the essence, or mode of God's existence, than the Samaritans did. No! this was a secret unfathomable by them both. Their superiority consisted in what, if rightly applied, would have terminated in a practical knowlege of their Maker; in pious affections towards Him; and in dutiful regard to his laws. And wherever, in Scripture, we meet with such an expression, as, "knowing God," or, "the knowlege of God," it is always connected with some moral duty, or revelation of Himself, which is plain and intelligible; and never implies an abstruse notion, or metaphysical idea. David says, "Thou, Solomon, my son, "know" thou the God of thy father, and serve him "with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; "for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if "thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if "thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever (f)." Had there been any difficulty in the precept, the father would have explained it to his son;

(f) 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

son; but as he could not fail of comprehending it, he dwells longer upon the duty subjoined; for had he swerved from that, it would have been of fatal consequence; a defect in practice being much more dangerous than an error in the understanding. But the prophet predicts (g), that under the Christian dispensation, our "knowledge," and duty to God, would need no comment to make it clear and practicable. "For this is the covenant that I will make  
 " with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the  
 " Lord, I will put my *laws* into their mind, and  
 " write them in their hearts, and I will be to them  
 " a God, and they shall be to me a people; and  
 " they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and  
 " every man his brother; saying, "know" the  
 " Lord, for all shall "know" me, from the "least"  
 " to the "greatest." And the same prophet (h) tell us, wherein this knowledge is to be exercised; and that it consisted in the proper discharge of the relative duties of life. For, speaking of the good reign of Josiah, King of Judah, he says, "He did  
 " judgment and justice; he judged the cause of the  
 " poor and needy; was not this to "know me,"  
 " saith the Lord?" Similar to this, is the whole tenor of the gospel: "Hereby do we know, that  
 " we know" him, if we *keep his commandments*.  
 " Beloved, let us love one another, for *love* is of  
 " God, and *every one that loveth*, is born of God,

H 2

" and

(g) Jerem. xxxi. 34.

(h) Jerem. xxii, 15. 16.



“ and “ knoweth” God (i).” The object of a Christian’s worship, and the knowlege of God, as far as it relates to any moral and practical purpose, is so clear and plain, that he may with truth affirm, that “ he knows” what he worships. But if the object be multiplied, or if unscriptural terms be used to express it by ; if his faith be perplexed, and his reason confounded, and what ought to be known “ from the “ least to the greatest,” be so mysterious, as to be understood by neither ; then it may be said of him, “ that he worships he knows not what.”

But ignorance and superstition were soon to give way to truth and reason ; and these abuses to be rectified by a reformation, which was then to take place. “ The hour cometh, and now is, says our “ Saviour, when the true worshippers, shall worship “ the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father “ seeketh such to worship Him.” An end was to be put at once to the contention, which had produced such heat and animosity between the Jews and Samaritans. The temple of Jerusalem, and the service in it, which God himself had instituted, was soon to cease ; and all that was to be required, was that men should worship “ the Father, in spirit and in truth.” To do this effectually, there needed neither forms nor ceremonies ; no solemn temples, nor costly victims, but the offering only of a clean hand, and a pure heart. “ Lord, who shall abide in thy

(i) John ii. 3. iv. 7.

“ thy *tabernacle*? who shall dwell on thy holy hill?  
 “ He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righte-  
 “ ousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He  
 “ that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done  
 “ evil to his neighbour, and hath not slandered his  
 “ neighbour. He that setteth not by himself, but is  
 “ lowly in his own eyes, and maketh much of them  
 “ that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his neigh-  
 “ bour, and disappointeth him not, though it were  
 “ to his own hindrance. He that hath not given his  
 “ money upon usury, nor hath taken reward against  
 “ the innocent; whoso doeth these things shall never  
 “ fall.” The worship of this man is acceptable,  
 and he it is that frequents the tabernacle of the Lord,  
 in spirit and in truth.

Having fully considered the several points, which  
 were the subjects of our Saviour's discourse, with the  
 woman of Samaria, I shall make a few remarks upon  
 it and conclude.

First, it follows from what has been said, That it  
 is to no purpose to be zealous for the place, or cere-  
 monies of worship, when the doctrines of it are  
 erroneous; much less to plead antiquity for the con-  
 tinuance of what ought never to have been admitted.  
 For if length of time sanctify abuses, and age make  
 error venerable, the church of Rome has a plea to  
 urge, which no one that has reformed from her can  
 dispute: For in this case, her precedence would be  
 her greatest honour. But if there be a church of

still greater antiquity than them all,—“ a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,” which has truth itself for its author, and salvation for its end, it is the *christian church* we should be zealous for, wherever is its place, and whoever worships in it. Nor need its faithful members ever fear that any danger can befall it. What force or power can assail that fabric, “ which is built upon the foundation of “ the Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief “ corner stone ?” The danger is not from without, but within. “ The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” “ But if any man build upon this “ foundation, wood, hay, or stubble ; if any man “ debase the scriptures, by adding to them absurdities “ in doctrine, or superstitions in practice, his work “ shall be made manifest ; for the day shall declare “ it ; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the “ fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

II. Our Saviour has predicted, a reformation would take place in the public worship ; and a day would come, “ when the true worshippers, would “ worship the Father, in spirit and in truth.” That this was not done in such purity, as it ought, even in the jewish church, which God’s own right hand had planted, appears from the hypocrisy and superstition, with which the Jews were so justly charged. Much less was it done in Samaria, “ where they worshipped “ idols in company with Jehovah.” The progress  
that



that divine truth made, during the ministry of Christ and his Apostles is astonishing. The corruptions, however, which soon followed, are too well known to need any remark. "The enemy sowed tares among the good seed," which grew and increased wonderfully. The revival of learning brings us to the æra of the Reformation, when the light of truth broke forth again, and held religion to our view; not indeed clad in her brightest attire, but disgraced with too many of the tawdry ornaments with which christian idolaters had disguised her. Much was then done, but much still remains to be done. That churches, as well as individuals, have not erred, is too much for human frailty to assume. We are "allowed" to say, "that the church of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Alexandria, of Rome, have erred." And if we do not arrogate to "ourselves" that infallibility, which was the cause of our separation from the latter, "We" may have erred likewise. But if candour will permit us to see our errors, and if we have good sense to correct them, we may be able in time to avoid the fate that now awaits the See of Rome, which is tottering to its very basis, by the weight of its own corruptions. And this we may be assured of, that "God will never suffer his *truth* to fail." For if amidst the general revolt of his own people, who were purposely set apart to worship him, "he reserved unto himself, seven thousand knees, which had not bowed to Baal," will that prophecy



prophecy remain unfulfilled, which expressly says, "that the time was coming, when the "true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth?"

Lastly,—I have only to add, that we, of this enlightened age and nation, who "make our boast of God, and profess to know his will and approve the things that are more excellent," that we be careful to let our practice keep pace with our knowledge; that in our belief we "hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints," which was given to them in a very short summary: "To believe Thee to be the only true God, and Jesus, whom thou hast sent, to be the Christ;" and that in our worship, we be in the number of those, who in the text, are stiled "the only true worshippers; who worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Thus our light will so shine before men, that they will glorify our Father which is in heaven.

To whom be ascribed all honour, power, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever.

F I N I S.

